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JOURNALISM

BY

C. L. R. SASTRI

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TO

THE MEMORY

OF

MY FATHER,

THE LATE

SIR C. Y. CHINTAMANI,

CHIEF EDITOR

OF

THE LEADER,

ALLAHABAD.

" Form is the golden Vase wherein Thought, that fleeting essence, is preserved to Posterity."—

Anatole France.

" Woe betide him who despises form, for a work endures by that alone."—**Ibid.**

" Though I have been haunted by the gnawing sense of guilt ever since that Christmas morning when I stole a chocolate elephant from the Christmas tree and let my parents think it was one of my younger brothers, I have always been willing to embezzle £10,000 provided my victim was wealthy. *On the other hand, my artistic conscience will never let me leave a sentence less good than I know I can make it by taking trouble."*—**Mr. James Agate:** "Bad Manners." (John Miles, 1938: P. 81.)

APPRECIATION

I have read in manuscript Mr. C. L. R. Sastri's book on Journalism. Being the son of a great Indian journalist and a brilliant journalist himself, what he does not know of journalism is hardly worth knowing. His book is a mine of valuable information and is written in a very attractive style. It is a book that will be read with great interest and profit not only by the journalists but also by those who are not journalists.

S. A. Brelvi,
Editor,
The Bombay Chronicle.

PREFACE

At the outset I should like to warn my readers that this book on "Journalism" does not pretend to be an exhaustive treatise on that subject. Indeed, within the space that is available to me it is simply not possible to go into the matter with any degree of thoroughness. Moreover, I have been pressed for time: of necessity I have had to write hurriedly. In addition, the material at my disposal has been all too meagre, and even the little that came my way could not be utilised by me in the manner I could have wished. For instance, I cannot boast, as Boswell could, in his Advertisement to the First Edition of his *Life of Dr. Johnson:*

> "Were I to detail the books which I have consulted, and the enquiries which I have found it necessary to make by various channels, I should probably be thought ridiculously ostentatious. Let me observe, as a specimen of my trouble, that I have sometimes been obliged to run half over London in order to fix a date correctly; which, when I had accomplished, I well knew would obtain for me no praise, though a failure would have been to my discredit."

I had to dispense with this sort of Gargantuan diligence owing to the exigencies of circumstance.

One should undertake a literary project only when one is assured of sufficient peace of mind. When there is, so to speak, no such quiet on the mental front the thing which,. otherwise, should—and, ordinarily, would—have been an exquisite pleasure becomes more or less a trial and a tribulation. Fate, of late, has been none too kind to me: it has elected, for reasons best known to itself, to bestow on me "more kicks than half-pence", and it has not disdained, as it notoriously does not when it suits its purpose, even to hit me below the belt on occasion. Often, while writing these pages, I was compelled to curse myself for having taken up this contract, and was more than once on the point of throwing up the sponge and retiring from the field ignominiously. But I held my hand just in time.

My only excuse for jumping at the idea of writing this book is that journalism has always had a strange fascination for me, and that "the stream of tendency" not ourselves that chooses our careers for us made me forsake many other callings in order, as I fondly hoped, to shed a lustre on this one. In the process, more often than not, I have had no career whatever to speak of, and have had to content myself with being a mere flotsam and jetsam on the ocean of life. But the immortal Mrs. Micawber was never more faithful to her impractical and, in many ways, impossible husband than I have been to this thankless mistress of mine, even during the darkest hours; and

that, I feel, is sufficient excuse for my continuing to call myself a journalist. After all, what is success and what is failure—viewed, that is, *sub specie aeternitatis*, and not merely from the vantage point of the present hour and minute?

It is customary for authors to conclude their "Prefaces" with a paragraph, long or short as the case may be, wholly devoted to the laudable purpose of rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's: in other words, of expressing their gratitude to all those who have been of any assistance to them in the matter of the publication of their books. This task is very much lightened for me, inasmuch as I have to thank one person only. I refer to that indefatigable collector of "Gandhiana" and the "good Samaritan" *par excellence*, Mr. R. K. Prabhu, Assistant Editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*. Him I salute most sincerely: for though my book, like all books, stands or falls by its inherent worth or worthlessness, it is the literal truth to say that it might never have attained the status of book-form but for his active interest in it. He is that real friend—the friend in need.

Bombay. C. L. R. Sastri.

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ERRATA

Page 30, line 16, read *litterateurs* for *literateurs*.
Page 137, line 14, read *H.W.M.* for *H.M.W.*
Page 138, line 25, read weeklies for weelies.
Page 145, line 27, read Canterbury for Caterbury.
Page 153, line 20, read gifts for gift.
Page 190, line 25, read ensuing for ensuring.
Page 207, line 9, read unprecedented for unprecendented.
Page 213, line 21, read criticisms for criticism.
Page 219, line 24, read morral for moral.
Page 224, line 9, read Is for is.
Page 234, line 3, read *Charles* for *Charle*.

CHAPTER I

INFLUENCES

I

I came to journalism by way of science. That, however, is not so startling as it may appear at first sight. All roads can (and, often, do) lead to journalism. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and, luckily, there is no rigid caste-system in this field. Journalism takes to its bosom everyone who evinces a genuine interest for it: that, and none other, is the "acid" test. We have been told, in season and out of season, that a poet is born, not made. If we but look into the matter closely we shall not fail to find that this aphorism is true of many other callings, besides. From what I know of journalism I can assert that if the thing is not in the blood one may never hope to be a journalist of any note. One catches the contagion young, or not at all. I speak, necessarily, from my own experience. In the last resort that is the only source of most of our reflections, not only on this subject, but even on

". . . .providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
Fixt fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute."

II

I was not brought up to be a journalist: in fact, I was definitely discouraged from pursuing that vocation. But, in a sense, journalism was in my veins, and I could not be prevented from taking a surreptitious interest in it. Even when I was in the lower forms that interest, incipient as it was bound to be at that stage, was fanned into a brilliant flame by the passive resistance movement which Mr. Gandhi inaugurated in South Africa in answer to that Government's repressive policy towards the Indians domiciled there. The *Leader* of Allahabad was always lying about the house then, and it was my invariable practice to devour with avidity not only all the items of news pertaining to that agitation but also all the editorials written thereon by the then distinguished editor of that paper. Those articles in the *Leader* were the starting-point of what I may call my "adventures" in journalism, which have continued right up to this moment. (That delightful author, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, it will be remembered, has published a collection of his essays to which he has given the suggestive name, "*Adventures* in Criticism.")

III

Later on, Mrs. Annie Besant, of hallowed memory, started her unique daily, *New India*. It was not precisely a new daily, for she but took over the old *Madras Standard*, but she renovated it to the basement, as it were, and lo! what a transformation! In

those days *New India* was a name to conjure with. It put even the *Hindu* in the shade. It would be no exaggeration to say that it made rings round the older papers. The enthusiasm it aroused in the younger generation, especially, was little short of marvellous. Then the Great War Number I got going, and the interest and importance of *New India*, enormous as they had been even before, increased by leaps and bounds. I was among the vast multitudes who were caught up in that *maelstrom*. All honour to that venerable lady! It was said of Falstaff that he was not only witty himself but the cause that wit was in others. It may likewise be remarked of Mrs. Annie Besant that she had not only a dynamic personality herself but that she was never really contented until and unless she succeeded in galvanising everything around her into active life. She was one of the very few who had a prevision of the shape of things to come. But nothing lasts in this world, and she and her paper have gone the way of "the many Ninevehs and Hecatempoli." I have mentioned *New India* because it intensified my already awakened interest in journalism.

IV

But all this is, really, like the crackling of thorns under the pot. What I may call, without any hyperbole, the *divine accident* happened some little time afterwards. It was in 1915, and every week copies of the *Morning Post* and the *Nation* and the *New Statesman* used to fall into my hands. It was my

first taste of *English* journalism, properly so called. I firmly decided to become a journalist when I began reading Mr. Ian Colvin's leading articles in the *Morning Post.* (Mr. Colvin was later to take on a different *avatar* as the adoring biographer of that hero of Jallianwala Bagh, General Dyer.) Such a sound judge of English prose as Lord Morley once said of Mr. Colvin that he wrote, not with a pen, but with a stiletto. No daily paper in England at that time had a more accomplished leader-writer. It was the editorials in the *Morning Post* which first taught me that there is such a thing as a chaste, an elegant, English diction. In Mr. Colvin's hands English prose

> ". . . . became a trumpet; whence he blew
> Soul-animating strains."

There never *were* such leading articles. Hazlitt has recorded of Cavanagh, the famous fives-player, that "his service was tremendous." The phrase, I am sure, can be applied, with equal truth, to Mr. Colvin's penmanship. In my adoration of his style I even overlooked the fact that he was a Tory of Tories.

V

But Mr. Colvin was, by no means, "the noblest Roman of them all." That title belongs, by prescriptive right, as it were, to the late Mr. H. W. Massingham of the *Nation.* He was my second "find." He was a genius if ever there was one. I know that that word has lost much of its original force: it has

become a sort of rubbed coin. At present there is a general abuse of words. They do not stand singly for an idea, as the late Mr. Edmund Candler has noted somewhere, but have become clotted in the mosaic of a formula which may mean anything, but which generally does not mean anything at all. Genius is a very rare phenomenon: almost as rare as the flowering of the aloe, or the laying of the phoenix's egg. "H. W. M." was among the elect: he was terribly at ease in Zion. There was nothing on which he wrote—from a lady's commerce with her looking-glass to man's intercourse with his Maker—which he did not touch to fine issues. As a leader-writer, as a feuilletonist, as a dramatic critic, and as a book-reviewer, Massingham "flamed in the forehead of the morning-sky." He died in August, 1924;

"....and, oh,
The difference to me!"

VI

Of him I shall have occasion to write in greater detail later on: suffice it to say here that he was my hero of heroes, and that whatever merits I may have as a writer are entirely due to his beneficent influence. Mr. Maurice Baring has said, in imperishable language, of that renowned actress, Sarah Bernhardt:

> "When Sarah Bernhardt played Adrienne Lecouvreur she used to recite the opening of that fable (that is, La Fontaine's of 'Les Deux

Pigeons'), and one felt as one heard it that for the perfect utterance of beautiful words *this was the Pillars of Hercules of mortal achievement*, that it was impossible to speak verse more beautifully." (My italics.)

I am prepared to lay all Lombard Street to a China orange, as the saying is, that Massingham's articles were "the Pillars of Hercules of mortal achievement." His mantle has not fallen on anyone since his death: the mould was broken when he was born.

VII

There have been other influences, besides: as, for instance, the *Saturday Review* and, later, the *Weekend Review*, both under the exhilarating editorship of Mr. Gerald Barry, the present Managing Editor of the *News Chronicle*. Mr. Barry, had fate but favoured him, might have been on the road to becoming another Massingham. He is also a born editor, and has the ability, as the other had before him, of gathering together under his wings the best journalistic talent around him, and inspiring in them the same loyalty. But his has been an exceedingly chequered editorial career.

It was Mr. Barry's distinction to have, in a sense, "discovered" the late Mr. Thomas Earle Welby's genius. I am pretty certain that that other idol of mine, Mr. J. B. Priestley, could not, also, have been what he has since become had it not been for Mr. Barry's initial encouragement. It was not a question merely of helping lame dogs over stiles: even

the most unquestioned talent requires a godfather. It was to the eternal credit of Massingham that he it was who first discovered Galsworthy: as it was to that of C. P. Scott of having discovered C. E. Montague, and to that of Leonard Rees of having rendered a similar service to the redoubtable Mr. James Agate. Mr. Gerald Barry's discoveries have been many; but by far the most important was that of having nurtured the genius of the late Earle Welby. Thus do journalists come to the succour of literature!

VIII

I am one of those who totally deny that any one is, strictly speaking, "self-made." Even the acknowledged giants cannot boast of their nativity as Glendower boasted of his:

". . . .at my nativity
The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes,
Of burning cressets; and at my birth
The frame and huge foundation of the earth
Shaked like a coward.

* * *

These signs have marked me extraordinary,
And all the courses of my life do show
I am not in the roll of common men."

There is, in this vast and heterogeneous world, no such being as a "self-made" man or woman. Some extremely credulous persons imagine themselves so made, that is all: if the truth were known, it would be found that they were made as much by others, and by outward circumstances, and by heaven-sent

opportunities, as anyone else that, in his rustic honesty, confesses to having had considerable extraneous help. I will not try to prick with the pin of a private scepticism the current faith regarding "self-made" men, but I cannot help thinking that it is all so much sound and fury signifying nothing, that it is all so much cant invented by persons that have risen from the ground to the leaf, in order, if I may say so, to self-glorify themselves.

IX

It is always both interesting and instructive to learn of the influences that have been at work in the matter of one's choosing one's career. The "young idea," if it is not for ever to remain juvenile, has, of necessity, to receive encouragement from some outside agency or other: else, it can never grow up to its full stature, it can never rise to the height of its argument. It will thus be seen that it is not mere vanity that has prompted me to write at such an enormous length on the influences that have been at work in my own case. It may be that, even with such influences at work, one may, eventually, make a mess of one's life. That possibility, of course, is always present. As a journalist I may never have set the Thames on fire; but is it so very small a thing to have worshipped in the shrines of such acknowledged masters? There are those who daily go from Dan even unto Beersheba and deny so much as a nodding acquaintance with the works of the giants. Have we fallen so low as to exalt that ignorance into an achievement? It is a Biblical injunction that we

should love the highest when we see it. It may not be given to us to do more, but we have justified our existence if we have contrived to do *that* little: at the least we shall have escaped the opprobrium of being designated as mere "clods," as mere automatons in human shape. This world's values are bizarre: there is, often, grotesque inversion. The man of culture, even though he may be a rank failure, according to accepted standards, is really leagues and leagues above your so-called successful person, who, however, by a strange Divine dispensation, may not be able to tell chalk from cheese in matters of the mind. That great American writer, Hermann Melville, reveals the difference in his own inimitable way in his masterpiece, *Moby Dick*: a book about which Mr. H. M. Tomlinson has confessed that it is one of the best things that America has done since the Declaration of Independence.

Says Melville:

> "There is a wisdom that is woe; but there is a woe that is madness. And there is a Catskill eagle in some souls that can alike dive down into the blackest gorges, and soar out of them again and become invisible in the sunny spaces. *And even if he for ever flies within the gorge, that gorge is in the mountains; so that even in his lowest swoop the mountain eagle is still higher than other birds upon the plain, even though they soar.*" (My italics.) (Everyman's edition: Dent: Pp. 368-9.)

The moral is plain for all to see.

CHAPTER II

WHAT IS JOURNALISM?

I

In the present chapter it will be my endeavour to analyse my subject. The question before us is: "What is journalism?" There is no way, as far as I know, of answering it succinctly: it does not lend itself to a summary treatment. It will not do, for instance, to say that such and such is journalism, and then to pretend that all the bother is over. The bother, on the contrary, begins at that point. Much that we ordinarily do not recognise as journalism is journalism, in fact, and a lot that passes for it, in common parlance, may not have even a remote connection with it when we examine it with due circumspection. In this field, as in others, many are called but few chosen. There is a real difference between an artist and an artisan. The artisan is the more practical man of the two; but it is the artist who has the "divine afflatus." He, indeed, paves the way, in a manner of speaking, for the artisan. One way of putting it is that he supplies, in this syndicate, the brains, while the other contributes the comparatively minor article of the hands; and we all

know that the brain can function even if the hands are taken away, whereas if the brain is still the hands are simply powerless to do anything: they lie in "cold obstruction" and "rot." In more colloquial language, they "call it a day."

What I want to convey to my readers is this, that all those who are privileged to work in a newspaper office are not, for that reason, to be termed journalists; nay, not even all those who happen to work in what is called the *editorial* department. I am aware that the successful running of a newspaper, like the successful running of any other concern, postulates some specialized knowledge on the part of those employed therein. But that specialized knowledge, in the absence of other things, should not be confused with what is known as the "journalistic technique." I should like to declare from the housetops the faith that is in me—namely, that unless one knows how to *write* one should not lay the flattering unction to one's soul that one is a journalist, in the strictest meaning of the word.

II

This is the real theme-song of my book: it runs like a refrain from the first page to the last. Of course, it cuts the ground from under the pretensions of many worthy persons. There are *journalists*, and there are *newspapermen*: the distinction, in my opinion, is vital. What has happened is that, in the common imagination, several species of men (not much resembling one another) are classified under the

term, "journalists,"—as (to quote from Shakespeare) mongrels, curs, shoughs, water-rugs and demi-wolves are all clept by the name of dogs. Thus has arisen much confusion that could easily have been avoided. I lay it down here and now that if one knows how to write one is a journalist, even if one has never seen the inside of a newspaper office in one's whole life-time; and that, by the same token, if one does not know how to write one is not a journalist but only a *newspaperman*, even if one has been born and bred in a newspaper office. In so saying I run a great risk of offending the vast majority of people, both inside and outside my profession. But that risk is well run in the sacred cause of truth. That fine critic, Mr. F. L. Lucas, in an illuminating essay he once wrote, in the now defunct *Life & Letters*, on "Criticism," complains:

> "There are, I feel, at present too many money-changers in the Temple of Literature, too many middlemen in Sion, too many guides and dragomans jabbering at the foot of Parnassus. It may be said that they only dupe those who are set on being duped by someone; and it is likely enough that there is no real cure but time." (*Life & Letters*: November, 1929: P. 435.)

This charge is true also of the allied art of journalism. In the last resort what keeps a newspaper functioning is the journalist proper: the rest, however valuable their work, are only so many "money-changers in the Temple of *Journalism*, so many

middlemen in Sion, so many guides and dragomans jabbering at the foot of Parnassus." They are only the artisans: the artist is the other man.

III

Broadly speaking, journalism came into existence when the first newspaper was printed. The "printing," however, is not the main point: it is an accident, or, rather, an adjunct, of what we commonly call civilisation. The basic idea is: circulation. In this sense there were, in a more modest fashion than now-a-days, of course, newspapers before there had ever been a printing machine. "Autolycus" was a common pedlar: he was a picker-up of sundry "unconsidered trifles." Probably, if the fancy be permitted, he had the rudiments of a journalist in him. What, after all, is the essential difference between a pedlar going on his rounds in the countryside and a newspaper circumnavigating the globe and finding itself on the breakfast tables of its readers of a morning? There is a primitive touch about the former, no doubt, and a correspondingly polished tone about the latter; but there is no *fundamental* difference, and whatever discrepancies there are between the two are due, mainly, to the operation of our old friend, the time factor. The time factor, we know, can work wonders in these matters. It can push apart what are really closely related, one with the other. The function that a modern newspaper performs was, in some respects, performed by the town-crier, for instance, with his beat of drums and fanfaronade of trumpets, and by

the inscriptions on stones. As Wordsworth said of the river Duddon:

"Still glides the stream, and shall for ever glide;
The Form remains, the Function never dies."

Stones and parchment and manuscripts played a very large part, in ancient days, as media of instruction and enlightenment to the public. Every schoolboy has heard of the great Emperor Asoka's edicts on pillars and slabs of stone. In Julius Caesar's time it had already been a well-tried practice to keep official records of important events. Then we hear of a *Peking Gazette* in China, which dealt in court news especially. Thus we see that memory goeth not back to a time when there was no journalism of some kind or other. Perhaps it should not be glorified by that name. Still, it was that in substance: why, then, should we quarrel about mere nomenclature?

IV

The eighteenth century was marked by a great advance in this line. The coffee-house took the place of the old tavern: where there was an exchange not only of

"Quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles,
Nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,"

but of more solid stuff even. The meetings were marked by reflection no less than by relaxation: they were, often, regular tournaments of wit. Solomon was fond of saying that just as iron sharpeneth iron,

so does the countenance of one man that of another. With the countenance, of course, goes the mind; and here we do not speak of mindlessness. Steele and Addison, Johnson and Goldsmith, were ornaments of these places. Those were the days of the essayists and the pamphleteers. People were better in the mass, there was usually a hearty give-and-take, and superior minds did not, as a rule, disdain to commune with inferior ones: on the other hand, they were only too eager to share the things of the intellect with whosoever was anxious thus to be benefited. Great men did not completely and irretrievably doff their humanity: they did not erect unscalable barriers round about their persons: *per contra*, they were free and easy-going, and their knowledge and wisdom could be availed of by anyone who chose to do so. In fact, it seems to me that what Hazlitt said of the period immediately following the French Revolution can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the time of which I am speaking:

> "Somehow that period was not a time *when nothing was given for nothing*. The mind opened, and a softness might be perceived coming over the heart of individuals beneath 'the scales that fence' our self-interest." (My italics.)

V

In any history of journalism space must be found for the eighteenth century and for Queen Anne's reign and for the coffee-houses that had come into fashion during that reign. More was done there

than met the eye; and they had the lion's share in moulding the literary taste of the age. They played the *role* of an English Academy. Some aspects of coffee-house entertainment were enumerated in this doggerel:

> "You may see there what fashions are,
> How periwigs are curled,
> And for a penny you may hear
> All novels in the world."

We are told that at Button's literature was eagerly canvassed, while again at Will's

> "The gentle beau, too, joins in wise debate,
> Adjusts his cravat, and reforms the state."

The most characteristic literary form of the eighteenth century, the essay, owed its origin to these same coffee-houses; and, as someone has written, "true to its original purpose, it faithfully mirrored the manners of the day when fiction presented nothing but ideals, and artificial comedy only caricature."

The *Tatler*, The *Spectator*, The *Rambler*, The *Idler*—all these were not exactly newspapers, in the modern connotation of the term, but they were some of the most important journalistic ventures of any time, and, at the beginning, they did not wholly disdain to be topical. Later on, however, they ceased to have any news-value, and literature, not politics, usurped their main interest.

VI

Steele and Addison, Johnson and Goldsmith, were journalists as well as literary men: their journalism blossomed forth into literature with the passing of time. Their age is mirrored in their lightest effusions: they are the stethoscopes through which we hear the heart-beats of their century. Even those who normally look askance at the Muse of History can learn something of the past from a careful perusal of those essays. If we are gifted with imagination we can traverse the centuries by their aid: we can re-enact the scenes amidst which our ancestors played their several parts—major or minor, as the case might be: we can laugh with them or weep with them, according to the mood of the moment: in a word, we can, for the time being, shed our own skins and creep into theirs —with as much success as our fancies allow. Journalism has to take into account the essay-form, as it has to reckon with the various other modes which literature and the Time Spirit adopt at their sweet will and pleasure. The coffee-house and the things of the mind that it engendered are important landmarks in the history of our subject. If they do nothing else they do this, as Thackeray, a keen student of the eighteenth century, suggested in his famous *Lectures on the English Humourists*:

> "As we read in these delightful volumes of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* the past age returns, the England of our ancestors is revivified. The Maypole rises in the Strand again in London; the

churches are thronged with daily worshippers; the beaux are gathering in the coffee-houses; the gentry are going into the drawing-room; the ladies are thronging to the toy-shops; the chairmen are jostling in the streets; the footmen are running with links before the chariots, or fighting round the theatre doors."

VII

I have stated my opinion, earlier, that the first requisite of a journalist is to know how to write, and that all his other qualifications are, at best, only secondary. *This does not necessarily mean that all writers are journalists: but it does definitely imply that no one is a journalist who fails to come out strong in this line.* He must have the mechanics of writing at his finger's ends. In these days it requires a little emphasising. The half-penny press and the illustrated papers have given a new orientation to what we used to understand by the term "journalism" in more spacious times. The late Lord Northcliffe changed all that: he imparted a "business" tinge to it from which it has not recovered even now. True, the profit motive had always been there: but it had never been the primary consideration. Nor did the idea—"by fair means or foul"—enter the minds of those responsible for the successful conducting of a paper. It would, of course, be a gross exaggeration to say that their right hands did not know the profits they made with their left, but they were never inordinately obsessed with *gains as gains.* They took these in their stride, as it were,

but kept their heads clear for more important matters. Thus it was that they contrived to avoid

> ".....this strange disease of modern life,
> With its sick hurry, its divided aims",

as Matthew Arnold aptly called it. Their papers and periodicals were things to enchant the mind, and not merely objects to ensnare the eye. They overflowed with "the feast of reason and the flow of soul." In the strictest sense of the word they catered for the *intelligentsia*. A wit remarked of the "Bright Young Things" that the noble lord, aforementioned, had been putting in the market at the time that "they were written by office-boys for office-boys." By no stretch of imagination could this charge be levelled at the *older* journals. Whenever, in these pages, I speak of "journalism" I have in mind these journals and what they represented; and not their successors and supplanters, which, in comparison with them, are "as moonlight unto sunlight, or as water unto wine." I am even moved to exclaim, with Hamlet:

> "Look here upon this picture and on this,—
> The counterfeit presentment of two brothers."

VIII

As the twig is twisted, so is the tree bent. Whether a given individual turns out, in the final reckoning, to be a great or an insignificant journalist depends in the main (apart from his God-dowered gifts)

upon the models he followed in his earlier stages, upon the ideal he set up for himself at the threshold of his career. That distinguished dramatic critic, Mr. Ivor Brown, felt impelled to confess recently: "A fool had brought me to Latin, but a wise man brought me to Virgil." There is much truth in this: a *single* false step at the commencement will spoil all our dazzling dreams, will tip the fat into the fire.

It is all the more necessary to stress this at the present juncture, as the world is full of journalists—so full, indeed, that we cannot, in a manner of speaking, see the wood for the trees: especially the Western World, where they seem to grow upon every tree-top and factory-chimney: in fact, wherever there is the least space for them to grow on. Journalism is a noble profession, even if some journalists are far from noble: and just now it is true enough that there are more reprehensible journalists per square inch of the earth's surface than there are honourable ones.

Lord Northcliffe queered the pitch for honourable journalists when he transmogrified what had been essentially a learned profession into what was, in practice, inseparable from a business proposition *pur sang*. He altered the whole face of journalism by so doing: he gave it an entirely new turn, which, however, far from benefiting it, has done it incalculable harm. Mr. A. G. Gardiner once boasted that he had never written a single line for the Harmsworth Press. That boast was well-founded. It is a

merit not to touch pitch when touching it is the most fashionable thing at the moment. Mr. Gardiner was, and (fortunately) still is, one of the brightest stars in the English journalistic firmament: as such he speaks with authority, and not as one of the Scribes, when he says that such and such an influence is pernicious. It needs no emphasising that what is pernicious to him cannot be precious to *us*, his inferiors by several degrees. "A.G.G." is among the giants: let us obey his injunctions if we would become even passably successful journalists.

IX

The trend of my argument must be apparent by this time. It is not for nothing that I have devoted a whole chapter to the influences that had been at work in my own case. Make sure that these influences are of the right sort, and you cannot go far amiss. Success—and resounding success at that—may not be in our hands: some element of luck inevitably enters into it, however much, as severe rationalists, we may deny its existence: but it is indisputably within our reach to avoid being dismal failures. By the mere act of appreciating worth wherever it is found we exalt ourselves to some extent, whether we know it or not. Disinterested love has its uses. Cultivate proper enthusiasms, and one day (if the gods are kind) you will yourself be the object of enthusiasm on the part of others. Generosity pays: whereas cynicism leads one only into a *cul de sac*. There were brave men before,

as well as since, Agamemnon; and, by parity of reasoning, we shall probably be wrong in imagining that after *us* there will be the deluge.

This brings us to the question of hero-worship. Carlyle wrote an entire book upon that theme. As usual, he exaggerated its potency hugely: he piled Pelion on Ossa, and generally gave us to understand that that was the only road to salvation. But, without dotting his every "i" and crossing his every "t", we may agree that, in essence, it is a commendable thing. Otherwise, how did it happen that our heroes had *their* heroes, in their turn, towards whom they employed equally dithyrambic language? Why did they also seem, to the unpractised eye, to go off their balance when describing the merits of *their* adored ones? Here we appear to be moving, if I may say so, in a sort of *virtuous* circle: admiration begets admiration, and this goes on "to the last syllable of recorded time." It is like the seed which fell upon good ground: it multiplies a thousand-fold. Else, what does the poet say?

> "When the high heart we magnify,
> And the sure vision celebrate,
> And worship greatness passing by,
> Ourselves are great."

The late Mr. H. W. Massingham gave expression to the same sentiment when he wrote of Lord Morley:

> "Undoubtedly Morley had the gift of discipleship. It is well for the world that some natures, possessed both of fineness and of

strength, are drawn, as by a magnet, to the great and the lovable, for otherwise the history of religions, including the best religion of all, could never be written." (*H. W. M*: Cape: 1925: P. 26.)

CHAPTER III

JOURNALISM AND LITERATURE

"For to admire an' for to see,
For to be'old this world so wide—
It never done no good to me,
But I can't drop it if I tried."

I

The late Mr. Augustine Birrell once defined Liberalism as being not so much a creed as a frame of mind. In a sense one may define journalism also in a similar fashion. Journalists have certain traits in common if one is diligent enough to search for them. There is a particular "slant of mind" which distinguishes them from others. They react in a manner all their own to the changes and chances of life: disdaining the merely rule of thumb methods, "the rude mechanic ways", which characterise the the vast majority of mankind. They have, if I may put it so, a more heightened sense of perception. They look for the distinctive even in the commonplace. To them a primrose by the river's brim is much more than a mere primrose by the river's brim. In their imagination it assumes a more poetic significance: it even becomes "translated." With their mind's eye they see the meanest flower that

blows as charged with more or less eternal verities: they visualise

> "..... more pellucid streams,
> An ampler ether, a diviner air,
> And fields invested with purpureal gleams;
> Climes which the sun, who sheds the brightest day
> Earth knows, is all unworthy to survey."

II

Journalism is an art like another; and its essence is in the lines I have quoted at the head of this chapter. For it is clear that if you are not one of those given to "beholding this world" off and on—a world to admire, or, at any rate, to assess at its correct valuation—you have not the makings of a journalist in you. Observation is the be-all and end-all of the profession. The journalist, in Burns's phrase, is the "chiel amang us takin' notes", and, faith, "he prents 'em". The same qualification, I admit, is required of your full-blown poet, novelist, or essayist: which is, really, however, only another way of saying that there is not much, if any, difference between journalism and literature. I have, in my time, read pronouncements after pronouncements emanating from some of the so-called *pundits* of "letters" to the effect that the two are quite different things, and that, if they meet at all, they meet only, like two parallel straight lines, at infinity. Well, this heresy ought, in my humble opinion, to be killed—and killed, too, as speedily as possible. Journalism and

literature should not be looked upon in this fashion: the fashion, that is, in which Prince Henry regarded himself and Hotspur: to wit, that the same orb could not contain both.

"Two stars keep not their motion in one sphere,
Nor can one England brook a double reign,
Of Harry Percy and the Prince of Wales."

III

I submit that it is a very false view of the matter. I go further and assert that those who would place them in water-tight compartments are rendering no service to either. I am aware that it is mostly the *literary* people that love to draw this red-herring across the trail: not, be it remembered, the literary people *sui generis*, the literary people "to the manner born", but those that are the notoriously *un*-successful imitators of them. Everywhere it seems to be a law of nature that the menials, so to speak, and not the masters, should rant and rave about their goods in all places, and irrespective of the hour and the season. I repeat that it is only the camp-followers of literature, not the genuine artists themselves, that are in the habit of making so much fuss, so much "heavy weather", about that (alleged) distinction. It may be argued, of course, that whereas journalism "abides our question", literature is "free". My point is that the finest journalism and the finest literature are alike imperishable: that there is not, if I may put it so, enough evidence to cover a three-penny bit to show that the one is very

much inferior to the other. The misunderstanding has, I believe, arisen in this way. Journalism has not produced as many remarkable men as literature. That is why the vast majority of people are apt to jump to the conclusion that journalism is, *ipso facto*, much below literature as a form of human endeavour. It is hardly fair to journalism. This is brought out clearly in G.B.S.'s tribute to that *nonpareil* among journalists, the late Mr. H. W. Massingham: Massingham, than whom you could not imagine a more civilised human being, as Mr. J. L. Garvin wrote of C. P. Scott of the *Manchester Guardian*. Mr. Shaw's tribute takes this form:

> "As I write these lines, comes the news of the death of our friend and contemporary, William Archer. The two vacant places seem to make a prodigious gap in the surviving front rank of late Victorian journalism. But Archer, like myself, was a journalist only, inasmuch as he wrote for the papers to boil his pot. Massingham was the perfect master journalist: the born editor without whom such pot-boiling would have been for many of us a much poorer and more sordid business. If he had left behind him a single book, it would have spoilt the integrity of his career and of his art. I hope I have made it clear that this was his triumph and not his shortcoming. I could lay my hand more readily on ten contributors for his successor than on one successor for his contributors. A first-rate editor is a very rare bird, indeed: two or three to a generation, in contrast

to swarms of authors, is as much as we get; and Massingham was the first of that very select flight." (*H.W.M*: Cape: 1925: P. 216.)

IV

I commenced this chapter with the remark that the essence of journalism consists in properly observing the world: and went on to say that the basic principle of literature is also the same: drawing the inference, in the process, that, broadly speaking, the two are not separate entities but run into each other imperceptibly. It is as if they were tethered in neighbouring stalls and a kick would, at any time, bring down the partition. I may, perhaps, put it like this: journalism is the vestibule of literature. Many famous men of letters are, and have been, journalists first and authors afterwards. I shall even assert that journalism is a necessary introduction to literature: at any rate, it has been so ever since newspapers began to function. Newspapers serve many queer trades: not least, that queerest trade of all—namely, literature. Those whose brows are very high will do well to read, mark and inwardly digest this: otherwise they may be fated to end as all brows and no literary appraisers—much as the Cheshire cat has been described to be all grin and not enough of cat. That excellent writer, Mr. Ivor Brown, has emphasised this, in his own trenchant fashion, in his article, "Journalism and

Literature", in the *Fortnightly Review* for January, 1932:

> "There is, fundamentally, no distinction between literature and journalism, except the temporal condition of periodical appearance and the material fact that one is printed with a cloth cover and the other is bounded by a sheet of paper. People are apt to sneer at journalism, partly because they confuse the well-considered work with the mere gossip, partly because it is available for a penny or two-pence. The snobbery of price is a very large and very discreditable element in the public opinion of this country. .....Free education may be a social necessity, but the absence of a price is bad for education."

Truer words than these have never been spoken: a very large number of books have grown to their present size and shape and status out of what, much earlier, had been but fugitive articles in ephemeral papers and periodicals. Those journals have disappeared "behind the white wave", but the articles are still a source of ineffable delight to us: they continue to beguile "children from play and old men from the chimney-corner" because they have been enshrined in permanent book-form. But that accident should not be allowed to deprive the periodicals concerned of the merit that is their due.

Journalism, in short, is often but the temporary embodiment of what comes to be known, subsequently, as literature.

V

To take only a few instances, were not Addison, Steele, Johnson, Hazlitt, journalists first and authors afterwards? What about Andrew Lang, George Saintsbury, George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, Arnold Bennett, Thomas Earle Welby, Robert Lynd, J. B. Priestley, Edward Shanks and others too numerous to mention? All, all had been journalists at the beginning. If they had not been journalists first they could not, I dare to say, have been such eminent men of letters later on. It is not merely that journalism supplies a first-class training ground for your would-be *literateurs*. But for that incentive some of them might not have had the inclination to dedicate their lives to literature at all. I am not here addressing those all-sufficient persons who deem it quite *comme il faut* to sneer at journalism and at journalists at the least provocation: they would not, we may rest assured, abate their ill manners were it but to save their souls. I am here addressing those who have still an open mind in the matter, as well as those who are willing to listen to the other man's point of view. As for the hoity-toity fellows,

I cannot do better than apply to them these lines of Rudyard Kipling:

"But he that is costive of soul to his fellow,
In the ways and the works and the woes of this life,
Him food shall not fatten, him drink shall not mellow,
And his inwards shall brew him perpetual strife;
His eye shall be blind to God's glory above him—
His ear shall be deaf to Earth's laughter around.
His friends and his Club and his dog shall not love him—
And his widow shall skip when he goes underground."

VI

Cutting the cackle and coming to the 'osses, I should like to suggest that the first requisite in those intending to adopt the career of journalism is an all-absorbing interest in it: else, they had better become engine-drivers or super-salesmen or cinema-actors or professional boxers. If journalism is not in their bones, nothing—not even machine-guns—can turn them into capable journalists. That, I hope, is clear enough. It is what Coleridge had in his mind when he penned the line:

"O Lady, we receive but what we give!"

If you do not come to journalism *con amore*, you can never make much of yourself as a journalist.

Taking up journalism merely by way of passing the time has never yet paid anyone. If your passion for journalism is kept up at white heat always, through good report as well as bad, you stand quite a sporting chance of becoming a top-notch journalist, though you may not have seen the inside of a newspaper office even once in your life: and, by the same token, you may, in the absence of such a pure gem-like flame, serve in a newspaper office till your hairs turn grey and yet fail to earn the name of a "journalist"—properly so called, I mean, and not a mere apology for it. That, I am afraid, is a point which has not received sufficient attention.

We should not permit ourselves to be deluded by appearances. We ought, on the other hand, to go about like Diogenes with a lantern, or, better still, with (in Sam Weller's expressive phrase) "a pair o' patent double million magnifyin' gas microscopes of hextra power", in search of the journalists that are really worthy of the name: the most of them that answer to the description being no more entitled to that sobriquet than every player in a film or a drama is justified in calling himself or herself an actor or actress. No: a truly competent journalist is a *rare ave in terris*; and the sooner this is realised the better it will be for the profession as a whole.

VII

The man who cannot write well need not, in my view of the matter (as I have stressed already),

ever hope to fashion himself into even a passable journalist. There are, I agree, several branches of journalism, but it is my firm conviction that, to whatever branch of it one may belong, one must have an eye, first, to style—to the *apparatus* of writing. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch once defined literature as "memorable writing". It is, probably, the soundest definition of literature that we have. I am not sure that it is not the soundest definition of journalism as well. Journalism is not a whit less "memorable writing"; and we may cut the Gordian knot by saying, with finality, that that journalism which cannot lay claim to being, even "north-north-west", "memorable writing" may be anything under the sun but assuredly not journalism. Journalists themselves, I am grieved to say, have not always attached sufficient importance to this aspect of the question. If an engine-driver, for instance, is shown to have made a mistake, to have gone off the deep end, he is at once dismissed. But not so a journalist. If journalists were also required to pay the penalty for their errors of omission and of commission, they, too, would, in a trice, become extraordinarily alive to the mechanics of writing. Style, then, is absolutely necessary: what is not less necessary is the ability to exhibit it when one is hard pressed for time. The merit is not with your literary gentleman who has leisure both to appear learned and to polish his periods. The merit is with your working journalist, who is notoriously always in a hurry, who

has no books at hand for reference, and who yet contrives to supply his readers, daily or weekly, with some columns of matter about which he need not be ashamed of himself in the final reckoning. A certain kind of mother-wit, if I may call it so, is absolutely essential. As the late Mr. C. E. Montague so beautifully observes, though in another connection (he is contrasting quantity and quality as regards reading):

> "If you read in the Polonian spirit, not dulling your palm with entertainment of each new-hatched, unfledged commodity of Mr. Mudie's and Mr. Boot's, but reading an old book again when a new one comes out, you will find that the whole of what you have read is comfortably within reach of your hand whenever it is wanted for a professional purpose. All of it is like that relatively small part of a bank's assets which figures on the balance-sheet as 'in hand or at call,' whereas the accumulations of most of your widely-read men seem to be somewhat deeply and remotely invested. No doubt their resources are well employed, in a sense, as Antonio's were when he had one argosy upon the high seas bound to Tripolis, another to the Indies, and a third to Mexico. But as soon as the cry was for cash, Antonio was hammered upon the Rialto. So you will often see men with the learning of an Acton or a Bryce gravelled for lack of a ready quotation at a pinch when

some fellow who never had any learning to speak of will pop out the one perfect thing as surely as if he enjoyed plenary inspiration. Is it too much to say that the wit of your most voluminous readers is prone to move slowly? That it is somehow weighed down with the thewes, the stature, bulk and big assemblance of their acquisitions? I once heard J. A. Froude and Andrew Lang talking at dinner. Froude, I fancy, knew ten times as much as did Lang. But whatever Lang knew was all there. He kept it mobilised the whole time. He could bring it to bear in an instant, while most of Froude's forces were like the Russian rural reservists who had first to walk for a week to the nearest railway station when mobilisation was ordered. Oh, give me always, as Falstaff advises, 'a little, lean.....bald shot', that will about and about, rather than one of those Samsons or Sandows of learning. I mean, of course, for human nature's daily use in the more lightsome walks of literature and her agreeable arbours. No blaspheming of divine knowledge is intended, except in the minor article of her not always stirring her stumps as much as she might". (*A Writer's Notes on his Trade*: Chatto & Windus: 1930: Pp. 31—32.)

VIII

In whatever way we may judge it, the ability to write at a moment's notice is a *sine qua non* of the

journalist's vocation. Nor is it without its advantages. There is a charm in spontaneity, which is woefully lacking in your studied efforts. The same author from whom I have already quoted has this excuse to offer for reprinting some of his dramatic criticisms. (In passing, I may add that that doyen of living English dramatic critics, Mr. James Agate, gives it as his considered opinion, in his *Playgoing*—Jarrolds: 1927: P. 45—that C. E. Montague was "the finest dramatic critic and the best writer about the theatre in any age or clime.") Says "C.E.M.":

> "And yet for old theatre notices there may be a kind of excuse. You wrote them in haste, it is true, with few books about you, or moments to look a thing up; hot air and dust of the playhouse were still in your lungs; you were sure to say things that would seem sorry gush or rant if you saw them again in the morning. How bad it all was for measure, containment, and balance! But that heat of the playhouse is not wholly harmful. Like sherris-sack in the system of Falstaff, it hath a twofold operation: 'it ascends me into the brain.....makes it apprehensive, quick, forgetive, full of nimble, fiery, and delectable shapes.' At least, it sometimes gives you that illusion; below yourself in certain ways, you hope you are above yourself in others." (See his "Prefatory Note" to his *Dramatic Values:* Chatto & Windus: 1910.)

IX

In other words, your A-1 journalist must have the knack of writing at the tips of his fingers. Pope boasted that he lisped in numbers because the numbers came. Alter it a little and it will be found to apply equally suitably to your accomplished journalist as well. For this purpose it is essential that he have an eye, always, for the *best writing* going: only so can he expect to be even moderately successful. Above all, he must studiously avoid the gutter press. Let him choose a few top-class papers and periodicals, and then let him stick to them through thick and thin. *There* he will find both the best journalism and the best literature. I cannot do better than conclude my article with another quotation from Mr. Ivor Brown's contribution to the *Fortnightly Review*, a reference to which was made by me a few pages earlier:

> "I suggest that we want a Little Journalism movement as well as a Little Theatre movement, the little journalism to be the voice of the few speaking to those who are not magnetized and mesmerised by a clamour about the net sales of two million and the consequent financial ability to hire the big guns of the fiction world to write cheery little essays on the Nature of God—these to be sandwiched among the details of the latest and loathliest murder. Big Journalism hands out considerable prizes but not, as a rule, for literature. It has its own ends and its own high standards

of efficiency. But the sweetening and enrichment of the common life by wise and witty criticism of social habits and by informed criticisms of the arts and sciences, it does not conceive to be its business. The minor organs do that. They have ever been, since the times of Defoe, Steele, and Addison, the nurses of the literature which was later to be in glory between covers. *The big journalism is a legitimate industry in the commercial scramble; the little journalism is a social necessity in a civilized community.* It is our duty and our advantage to remember its past, to consider its present, and to foster its future." (My italics.)

In the end, it is quality, not quantity, which tells. Let us follow in the footsteps of Landor, who declared: "I shall dine late: but the room will be well-lighted, the company few and of the best."

CHAPTER IV

NEWS

I

Once, during my college days, I was asked to write an essay on what I deemed, at that time, to be the greatest need of the world. The Great War Number I was still raging with unexampled fury, and it seemed to my simple mind that the question answered itself. The greatest need, undoubtedly, was "peace on earth and goodwill towards men." I, therefore, straightaway started harping on that string till I, or the string, broke. On second thoughts I am afraid my judgment went astray. Wars come and wars go, peace is declared and is, again, made to depart (ignominiously), but *newspapers* remain—the one enduring picture, or panorama, in an otherwise perpetually changing landscape. They remain, because they fulfil a vital function: because, not to put too fine a point upon it, *they* are the greatest need of the world.

If we are candid with ourselves we shall have to confess that we cannot get on for a single day without them: that, in their absence, we are apt to find that life has become stale and unprofitable—"a

twice-told tale vexing the dull ears of a drowsy man." Philosophers enjoin us that when we come across the spectacle—none too rare—of indescribable suffering in our midst, when we see fellow-man, in the vulgar phrase, properly "getting it in the neck", we should say to ourselves: "There, but for the grace of God, go I"! This advice is based on the sound assumption that we are all, at bottom, but creatures of circumstance, and that none of us is so infallible that he is justified in patting himself on the back for not being like his less fortunate brethren.

II

Let us imagine that, for days on end, no newspapers have been published. We shall then be in a position to realise the full extent of our deprivation: in the last resort it is these which save us from boredom and brown study. We shall, then, do well to murmur to ourselves, in the silent sessions of sweet thought: "There, but for the grace of these newspapers, I should be plumbing unfathomable depths of ennui"!

I have often toyed with the idea that, had newspapers existed at the time, Hamlet would probably not have given himself up to such unbearable melancholy as we have learnt to associate with his name. Of course, in the process, we should have lost the most glorious play extant in the English language; but a brother—flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone—would have been saved. If, for instance,

whenever he muttered to himself, "To be, or not to be—that is the question," his eyes had fallen on the imposing headlines of that morning's *Elsinore Times* lying on the table beside him, he might—who knows?—have been induced to cultivate a more cheerful outlook—aye, even on incest, and man's ingratitude, and the frailty of woman. "To be, or not to be", indeed! To read, or not to read, that morning's paper—*that* should have been the question!

III

Newspapers are a necessity: they are not a mere luxury, to be dispensed with at our sweet will and pleasure. We may, at a pinch, bring ourselves to do without our morning's cup of soothing bohea, but not without our morning's paper: so much so, in fact, that the stars in their courses have decreed that, even on the Day of Rest, we shall not be deprived of that customary consolation. (In this connection it may not be quite out of place to enter a caveat against a recent practice of our more nationalist-minded newspapers. It has become fashionable for them to declare a "hartal" on some selected day by way of protest to the authorities concerned. This is, to put it mildly, meaningless.)

It has been said that to err is human. To be on the *qui vive*, as it were, for the latest news is equally so. *Politics* comes in later on—the first (and fiercest) cravings of our hunger have already been satisfied by the solid and substantial fare of the *news columns*, which tell us

"What the Swede intends or what the French," and much else on the same lines.

IV

This brings us to a discussion of what the chief function of a newspaper is. Its chief function—and there will hardly be any dissentient voice here—is to disseminate news, and to disseminate it as impartially as possible. The political complexion of the paper does not affect the issue. The publication of news must be its first concern: with it goes its unbiassed presentation. This needs stressing in our day. Some papers do not publish *all* the items of news that they receive, and even when they do so they contrive to serve their ends by the *manner* in which they present them. Suppression of items which they do not like is a very common practice.

Sometimes, however, they have no option but to give them publicity. In that event they have recourse to that other weapon in their hands,—the weapon, namely, of *discrimination.* They can shove them on to an unimportant page, they can give them very insignificant headlines, they can print them in microscopically small type, and they can even delay printing them by twenty-four hours: by which means they hope to draw their fangs, as it were, to render them innocuous, to postpone the evil day. It is true that, more often than not, this is all so much hate's labour lost, because, by reading the rival organs, we shall be in a position to redress the

balance, so to speak. The rival organs magnify just those items of news which the other papers have sought, in vain, to belittle.

But this is, unfortunately, true only up to a point. The most of us are not affluent enough to buy all the papers: to buy even the more important of these: to buy more than one paper, in short. In these cases the ruse succeeds: the poor man must add this to the already formidable list of his misfortunes. I now and then fancy that the time is fast approaching when the man of small means has no alternative left him but to make an inglorious exit from this world. Of course, we are under no obligation to purchase even that one paper which we do: in which event we shall be starved of *all* the news, and not only of a portion of them:

> ".....*there's* the respect
> That makes calamity of so long life;
> * * * * * * * * *
> And makes us rather bear those ills we have
> Than fly to others that we know not of."

In this matter I must be understood to be speaking from inside knowledge.

V

News is sacred: that is the first law which the journalist must learn to obey. His natural bias, his personal predilection, should not be allowed to influence him. When he is engaged in the task of presenting news he must be content to put his private

opinions "in cold storage," to adopt a phrase that Mr. Brenden Bracken has made famous in another context. We are told that there is a time for blank verse and a time, too, to refrain from blank-versing. Likewise, there is a time for broadcasting a journalist's political leanings, and a time, too, to refrain from such broadcasting. *The news-columns are quite definitely not the forum for the declaration of his political testament.* These are a sort of "No Man's Land": a journal may be representing *any* view it may choose on a public question, but the actual news about it, when it appears in its columns, must not be coloured by that view. This point has to be driven home to all journalists. Lady Oxford once confessed poignantly that there are no "gentlemen" among women: let not the same charge be levelled at journalists, too.

In this connection the name of C. P. Scott of the *Manchester Guardian* naturally springs to the mind. He was, by conviction, a Radical of Radicals. As a matter of fact, the older he grew the more radical he became. Age never hardened the arteries of his mind, but rather gave them elasticity. Of him it could be said, more than of any other journalist of his generation, that he really *marched with the times.* But that did not preclude him from being scrupulously fair to the Tories, either in his political comments or in his presentation of news concerning them. His paper supplied a most impartial platform for people of all shades of opinion.

The point is that neither he nor his party suffered in the process. On the contrary, precisely on account of his strict impartiality, his unflinching fairness, he raised the *Manchester Guardian* to a pinnacle of excellence and importance never attained by any other paper either before, or since: thus inculcating in us the valuable lesson that sometimes honesty can be the best policy and that righteousness need not be its own reward.

VI

I repeat: news is sacred. We are in deadly peril of forgetting it—especially in these strenuous days, with nothing less than a *global* war around and about and above us. Virtue had nearly departed from the profession of journalism even before Poland was invaded by the Nazi hordes five years ago: afterwards, there has been, practically, no virtue to speak of. The papers have ceased to be vehicles of news, and have become instruments of *propaganda*, instead.

That word brings us, as with a jerk, to the real crux of the problem. We have heard of the "Stone Age," the "Iron Age," etc. : we are justnow living in the "Propaganda Age." We are being flooded with propaganda—and not only in the columns of the newspapers. Propaganda is, at present, in the very atmosphere we breathe. To adapt the words that Emerson used about Burns' songs,

"the wind whispers it, the birds whistle it, the corn, barley, and bulrushes hoarsely rustle it, nay,

the music boxes at Geneva are framed and toothed to play it; the hand-organs of the Savoyards in all cities repeat it, and the chimes of bells ring it in the spires."

VII

It is true that propaganda can boast of excellent and unexceptionable parentage. It first saw the light of day when the several religions were founded: for, are they not so much propaganda on behalf of the Almighty? Doubtless, that sort of propaganda has always been worth while. Even in *Paradise Lost* the dice are heavily loaded against the Prince of Darkness and, with the best will in the world, Milton had no choice but to sing of his decisive defeat at God's hands:

"Nor was his name unheard or unadored
In ancient Greece; and in Ausonian land
Men call'd him Mulciber; and how he fell
From Heaven they fabled, thrown by angry Jove
Sheer o'er the crystal battlements; from morn
To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve,
A summer's day; and with the setting sun
Dropt from the zenith like a falling star,
On Lemnos the Aegean isle."

In all these sagas and chronicles and fables the Wicked One—one of the two belligerents—gets, in the end, the rawest of deals indeed. By sheer unscrupulousness and the lust for power at any price he might have been able to achieve a few brilliant vic-

tories at the beginning, no doubt,—some Pearl Harbours and Dunkirks, so to speak,—but, as in our own day, he would be beaten to the knees before long and be compelled to disgorge his immoral gains with a vengeance, as it were.

VIII

There is a difference, however. This was, it is true, propaganda in its own fashion. But, though the ultimate result of these Gargantuan conflicts was never left in doubt in the readers' minds—as the authors unashamedly confessed to writing them in order to

". . . . justify the ways of God to men"—

it has yet to be recorded, in their favour, that they did strive to "play fair," according to their lights, and, in the literal sense of the words, to give the Devil his due. Even Ravana—that "big, bold, bad baron"—was depicted as having his good points: he was not, it would seem, of blackness all compact: nor was his guilt anything like being "totalitarian" in its scope.

But modern propaganda has not these relieving features. It goes "all out," as the saying is, to win, and does not make a secret of the fact that the end justifies the means. Let us recall some of the ghastly stories that were in circulation during the last war in the name of propaganda: they were lapped up like milk even by hard-headed men and women.

They were shown to be devoid of the least vestiges of truth later on: to be pure banana-oil, as Mr. Wodehouse would have phrased it. But, meanwhile, irreparable mischief had been done. The perpetrators of this kind of propaganda are too apt to forget that it is by such means that wars may be won, all right, but peace may be lost, also.

Propaganda, then, is a malodorous word. Even in a worthy cause it may do a lot of harm. I have been writing about "news." But we do not get undiluted or unbiassed news now-a-days. We get only news that is "tainted" by propaganda. The poet asked of his generation:

> " Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
> And did he stop and speak to you,
> And did you speak to him again?
> How strange it seems and new !"

He might very well have asked *us*, instead, whether we come across *news* "plain." Should we laugh or weep at this distortion of what was once held to be so sacred?

IX

The man in the street also may not be entirely blameless in the matter. The public likes to be given ginger "hot in the mouth," and the newspapers supply the article. But the issue is not so simple as that. Newspapers, from "their coign of vantage," have it in their power to educate public opinion and to "touch" it to "fine issues." In other

words, they have immense power to do good. Why, then, should they not set about this, their main task, in right earnest, instead of going out of their way to vulgarise the public taste? Like the poor relations in Charles Lamb's essay vulgarity is everywhere about us now—in literature, in journalism, in the cinema, in the drama, even in eating and drinking.

But the chief sinner in this respect is the modern newspaper, with its net sales of millions, and with a few press lords controlling all the papers in the country. Mr. A. G. Gardiner said of Lord Northcliffe that he found journalism a profession and turned it into a trade. It was at that precise moment that vulgarity in journalism set in. Somehow "Big Business" has a knack of degrading whatever it comes into contact with; and it has degraded journalism. That invariably happens when one caters to the *lowest* instincts around us. Lord Morley once declared of newspapers that they were huge engines for keeping discussion on a low level. When "Big Business" took a hand in them it inevitably inaugurated a downward movement in these organs of public opinion, as they are called, and the disastrous results are daily before our eyes.

X

That sensitive artist, Mr. Aldous Huxley, was so very much upset by the vulgarity he found in literature that he had to sit down and write a whole book about it. He went about the task in his usual

thorough and erudite fashion, and instanced many authors in support of his contention. The late Mr. Thomas Earle Welby selected that book as a peg on which to hang one of his learned and witty discourses. He wound up the discussion by asking, in effect, why any man should be so anxious to hunt this up, whether in literature or in life:

> "To make an end of an interminable inquiry, the only thing more dangerous than inability to detect vulgarity in the work of others or in one's own work is too constant a watchfulness for it. As it is bad to be a snob, but worse to be infallible in perceiving snobbery, bad to be mean but worse to be always alert for meanness, so it is bad to be vulgar in one's reading or writing but worse to be in terror of vulgarity. In the early days of bicycling it was reported by novices that the more they consciously studied to avoid a cart on the road the more likely they were to wobble into it. One can only say to all one's fellows of the craft, *de nobis fabula narratur*". *(The Dinner Knell:* Methuen: 1932: P. 62.)

This cannot be gainsaid: all extremes should be avoided. But, still, it does not dispose of the accusation of vulgarity.

News is sacred. But propaganda is not, nor is the vulgarity issuing from it.

XI

I have devoted so many pages to this chapter, because, in a sense, it forms really the backbone of

my subject. A newspaper, of necessity, deals with news, and it is of paramount importance that we consider everyone of its aspects, or as many of them as possible. I have not exhausted the list, nor can I do so within the space available to me. News is sacred, but, as I have pointed out already, it can be suppressed, in part or in its entirety: it can be belittled: it can even be misrepresented. A "black-out" alone, or a "brown-out" alone, is bad enough, in all conscience. If misrepresentation is also added to it, then the whole thing becomes a *melange* of half-truths and falsehoods that can, with difficulty, be differentiated from fiction proper, from fiction naked and unashamed, from fiction that sets out to be fiction and "no d—d nonsense."

We want honest journalism, not sensational journalism. But, after the advent of Lord Northcliffe —after his *irruption*, rather—into this field, there has been a very marked metamorphosis in its standards: they have suffered a sea-change into something *vile* and strange.. Mutilation, or at least distortion, of news has become the rule, not the exception. What suits the proprietor's, or the party's, book goes in, what does not is choked at its source. We have to do, then, with a censorship, not only of the Government, but with a censorship that has its origin in the newspaper office itself. It is *self-inflicted* censorship ; and, as such, the less pardonable.

Unfortunately, this vice has spread to India also. Not only the Anglo-Indian press, but the Indian

press as well resorts to this pernicious device on occasion. The Congress organs, for instance, rarely publish criticisms of their party's policy, or of their supreme leader, in full, or give them the prominence that is their due. Not satisfied with heckling its critics on the public platforms, our *soi disant* premier political organisation in the country institutes a kind of heckling in the columns of its papers also. Whether it is a happy augury for the future that we so eagerly anticipate—Congressmen and non-Congressmen alike—I shall leave my readers to decide.

XII

The commercialisation of the press is at the root of all this, and more: it is at the root, likewise, of most of the propaganda that we notice about us. We cannot gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles. Similarly, we cannot expect higher standards from a press that has been demoralised by its impact with Big Business. After all, what is the primary aim of these press magnates? Is it to minister to the public weal? Is it to bring happiness and prosperity to the populace?

Their primary aim is to look after their own interests, which they do with a zeal worthy of a better cause; and if these come into conflict with those of the commonalty,—why, then, so much the worse for the commonalty! We know what happens when an iron pot and an earthenware pot collide with each other. These millionaires have never been

accused of being in love with "the canker of a calm world and a long peace": rather is their conception of paradise a world of turmoil, a world at sixes and sevens with itself. As the late Mr. H. W. Massingham puts it, in a paper prepared, at the request of leading Co-operators, for the Co-operative Congress at Nottingham in 1924, on "The Press and the People," and reprinted in *H. W. M:*

> "Now truth, and fair dealing, and peace—national and industrial—are not merely ideals for a society as ours, they are necessities. But a purely commercial Press is, and must be, an anti-social thing. It wants war because war sells papers; it wants crime because crime sells papers; it wants all forms of exciting amusement because exciting amusement sells papers; in particular, it wants gambling, because gamblers buy papers, and journalism makes gamblers of women and children as well as of a large proportion of the men of our nation. And it wants industrial society to remain pretty much as it is, or, if possible, to come more and more under the power of capital, because its revenues and personal interests are rooted in the Capitalist system and its conductors believe in no other." (Cape: 1925: P. 135.)

The upshot of all this is that what, at the commencement, looked like being a blessing to society, what promised to usher in a new Golden Age, is well on its way to disrupting that society altogether,

to throwing away the baby with the bath-water. Small blame to us if we rub our eyes in wonder and ask ourselves, incredulously: "What will the harvest be!"

CHAPTER V

THE NEW JOURNALISM—I

I

In an earlier chapter I insisted that one distinguishing mark of a journalist is his gift of observation. Having eyes he must see, and having ears he must hear. He must look at "this goodly frame, the earth," "this most excellent canopy, the air," "this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire", with an elemental faculty of wonder.

> "What a piece of work is man: How noble in reason: How infinite in faculties: in form and moving, how express and admirable: in action, how like an angel: in apprehension, how like a god: the beauty of the world: the paragon of animals!"

This rhapsody is Hamlet's, and is worthy of him. Well, your journalist must revel in this spectacle. He must come to his work every morning with a lively sense of the eternal freshness of the world. He must bring the mind of an earnest student to bear on affairs, not the cynicism that is daily becoming more and more common among the sons of men.

The mental approach should be sane and healthy and hopeful—and, withal, innocent—and not be too much dominated and complicated by the manifold "complexes" which the flesh is heir to. In a word, there should be more enthusiasm, more of the Ukridgian "big, broad, flexible outlook", more of the spirit that is willing to

"Find tongues in trees, books in the running
brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything."

Carlyle expresses it beautifully:

> "This green, flowery, rock-built earth, the trees, the mountains, rivers, many-sounding seas;—that great deep sea of azure that swims overhead; the winds sweeping through it; the black cloud fashioning itself together, now pouring out fire, now hail and rain; what *is* it? Ay, what? At bottom, we do not yet know; we can never know at all. It is not by our superior insight that we escape the difficulty; it is by our superior levity, our inattention, our *want* of insight. It is by *not* thinking that we cease to wonder at it.....This world, after all our science and sciences, is still a miracle; wonderful, inscrutable, *magical* and more, to whomsoever will *think* of it."

II

This is the state of mind in which your true journalist should set to work. But what do we find

in reality? It is the seamy side of life that gets into the headlines. In the Greek tragedies all the dirty business was understood to have happened behind the stage: it was taken for granted and was never made to obtrude before the footlights. It was not brought out into the open, and the audience was saved an ungainly sight. The murders and the duels were left to the imagination; and it was only the less poignant stuff that was emphasised. The Greeks were imbued with both sense and sensibility: they were always for the "golden mean". We, moderns, may very well emulate their example. The disease and the squalour and the dirt are our permanent heritage. Why should we give them more prominence than they deserve? Our newspapers, however, hold a different view. Their motto would appear to be: "A sensation a day keeps the doctor away!"

These sensations are manufactured from a variety of sources; and, sometimes, from none at all. Out of nothing nothing comes, said Lucretius. He, obviously, reckoned without the modern newspaper, the newspaper of the post-Northcliffean era. If there is a reasonable basis for the sensation, so far so good: everything goes smoothly, on all six cylinders, as it were. But suppose there is no such reasonable basis. Suppose there is no basis worth speaking of. What then? Shall we be downhearted? Shall we ground arms? Shall we lie supine? No, not in the least: we shall *create* a basis *in vacuo*! The idea

is not only to make a mountain of a molehill, but to make a mountain of—absolute matterlessness. *The mountain must be there, at any cost.* There is an excuse, too, if you care to listen to it. Mr. Kennedy Jones, in his book, *Fleet Street and Downing Street*, supplies it:

> "A new class of readers had come into existence as a result of the Education Act of 1870. They were the children, the grandchildren, and the great-grand-children, of people accustomed to public hangings, public whippings, pillories, ducking-stools, stocks. Was the taste engendered by such sights during the centuries to be outbred by the cheap schooling of a single generation?"

Mr. Kennedy Jones was one of the founders of the *Daily Mail.* He was hand-in-glove with Lord Northcliffe. We may safely infer that he caught his fire from the noble lord's torch. The noble lord had an engaging way with him, and few who came into contact with him could resist his fascination. He could easily lead them by the nose, he could easily convert them to his faith.

III

What was that faith? It was simplicity itself, once you grasped it; but there was a method in the madness, all the same. Lord Northcliffe was among the first to capitalise the fact, already referred to in my quotation from Mr. Kennedy Jones's book, that "a new class of readers had come into

existence as a result of the Education Act of 1870." So far as this was concerned he desired to be "foremost in the files of time." He read the public mind as few had read it either before, or after, him; and his one ambition was to pander to its cravings, real or imaginary. He, indeed, was indefatigable in "tickling the ears of the groundlings." From one point of view he was the greatest democrat of the age. Once he saw the light—he never wavered: he went right ahead and did not look back. Historically, Sir George Newnes preceded him with his *Tit-Bits*. But Alfred Harmsworth, as he then was, determined to go one better than Sir George and his paper. If he had known his Whitman Sir George would have consoled himself with the reflection:

> "I am the teacher of athletes,
> He that by me spreads a wider breast than my own proves the width of my own.
> He most honours my style who learns under it to destroy the teacher."

The young man, of course, could not "destroy his teacher." Like a famous brand of whisky *Tit-Bits* is still going strong: in spite not only of *Answers* but of its numerous offspring as well. Nevertheless, Harmsworth's *riposte* to Sir George Newnes's weekly succeeded beyond his wildest expectations; and he marched from strength to strength until—at last—he was able, in his new

avatar as Lord Northcliffe, to purchase even the London *Times*. J'ever see the like of this? After that he became, and remained till his premature demise, the Napoleon of the press in England.

IV

The career of Lord Northcliffe is interesting, not only in itself, but as a pointer to the new journalism that sprang up at his command all over the British Isles. He was not, as I have suggested, the pioneer proper in this field, because there had been someone before him in England itself who had already led the way. He caught a hint or two from American newspapers also. Still, broadly speaking, we can call him the father of the new journalism without doing any appreciable violence to truth. He struck out new paths in *all* these directions: he rendered his papers interesting, he made them cheaper, he started "illustrated" papers, he introduced competitions, he realised the enormous importance of advertisements—in fact, he innovated almost everything that we have come to understand by the term, the modern newspaper. He made it not only cheaper but more attractive as well. He adopted the latest modes of printing and machinery. "Money makes the mare go", and Lord Northcliffe was simply ill with it. He converted journalism into an adjunct of Big Business. He created newspaper trusts and combines, which his brother, Lord Rothermere, was later to develop still further. *And he did something more.*

He expunged the words, "principles" and "consistency", from his lexicon. Did I not say, earlier, that he was a democrat of democrats? He was always adept in trimming his sails to the prevailing political wind. Once he declared to a friend, during the Boer War: "Prove to me that two-thirds of England is pro-Boer and I'll make the *Daily Mail* a pro-Boer newspaper tomorrow." His principles hung about him, in Falstaff's phrase, "lightly, like an old lady's loose gown." The poet boasted that his days were "bound each to each with filial piety." Palpably, this could not be said of Lord Northcliffe and his disciples. The only touchstone was sales and the profits derived from sales. If his pockets were well-lined the newspaper magnate did not mind to what particular hue of politics he and his organs belonged at the moment. Like the chameleon he could change his colours in a trice.

V

I have already cited one example of what I may call his political malleability. During the South African War he was fiercely anti-Boer; but, when a friend remonstrated with him that he might possibly be overdoing the thing, he suavely replied that if his friend could convince him that the vast majority of the people were friendly towards the Boers he would not hesitate to become pro-Boer himself. It would all depend, in the end, on which side the "big battalions" were: he himself, like Uria Heep, was "umble" to the core and would not dare to

have the luxury of his own opinions on any subject, being the self-appointed servant of the public as he was. What is the latest lunacy, he would seem to ask himself, and, having ascertained it, would plump for it with his whole heart in the next issue of his paper.

Is the nation not on the friendliest terms with France? Very well, Lord Northcliffe would direct the full blast of his fury at that renegade country, cursing her with bell, book, and candle. Some years hence he would discover that the national enemy is Germany, whose cause he had espoused valiantly during his Francophobe days, and then, caring two hoots for the glaring contradiction, would begin to fall foul of the Fatherland with the same zest that he had evinced, previously, in the other affair. Mr. A. G. Gardiner, in his pen-portrait of the noble lord, resurrects these incidents in his own inimitable manner.

Says this modern Napoleon in 1899:

> "If the French cannot cease their insults their Colonies will be taken from them and given to Germany and Italy .... The French have succeeded in thoroughly convincing John Bull that they are his inveterate enemies.... England has long hesitated between France and Germany. But she has always respected the German character, whereas she has gradually come to feel a contempt for France.

> ....Nothing like an *entente cordiale* can subsist between England and her nearest neighbour."

Not a whit abashed, he writes in 1903:

> "Yes, we detest the Germans and we detest them cordially. They render themselves odious to the whole of Europe. I would not tolerate that anyone should print in my journal the least thing which might today wound France; but, on the other hand, I would not like anyone to insert anything that could please Germany." (*Prophets, Priests, and Kings*: Dent: 1914: P. 90.)

No wonder that Mr. Gardiner is moved to conclude:

> " The revolution is complete. The old journalism is dead, the voice of *Answers* speaks in the thunder of the *Times*, and Lord Northcliffe 'bestrides the world like a Colossus', the type of power without the sense of responsibility—of material success without moral direction." (*Ibid*: Pp. 96-7.)

VI

This is the "new" journalism with a vengeance, as it were. In effect, it is barely distinguishable from commerce, and has nothing to do with the journalism that preceded it. *That* was to this as "Hyperion to a satyr", as the melancholy Prince would

have put it. If we wanted salvation, could we (to quote him once more) on *that* fair mountain cease to feed and batten on *these* moors? But, unluckily, there is no way out of it—at any rate, for the present: the press magnates have seen to that. Our hands and feet are bound; and freedom of movement is denied to us. We cannot alter the system, even if we wish. With the exception of a few journals, like the *Times*, the *News Chronicle*, the *Daily Herald*, and (of course) the *Manchester Guardian*, all the other papers—or almost all of them—have long ceased to be independent.

They cannot call their souls their own. They are mere marionettes suspended at the end of a string, and play and dance as the string is pulled by the master of the ceremonies. Their editors are only so many puppets in the hands of their employers: automatons, having no power of volition. They have minds, but these have ceased to function: they have made the important discovery that, in an unreal world, mindlessness is more paying. In the old days the editor of a paper was a force: his lightest word was mightier far than any law of the land. There were proprietors, no doubt, but they wisely remained in the background, not caring to reveal themselves except on the rarest of occasions; so that it may be said without any exaggeration that the editors held sway over a very extensive dominion, indeed. A Scott, a Spender, a Gardiner, a Massingham were names to conjure with: they were giants. But modern proprietors do not encourage either

genius or independence in the profession. At the first signs of these alarming symptoms they come out from their fastnesses and scotch the malignant growths beyond any chance of recovery.

The point is that before these Pashas and Ataturks journalists of any distinction have to hide their diminished heads in shame. They have simply no chance. They must be "Yes-Men," or get out. They prefer to get out. Thus the new journalistic coin drives out the old, and we find ourselves where we are. Which is the modern newspaper that can justifiably claim that it is in the same street as the *Daily Chronicle* and the *Nation* under Massingham, the *Daily News* under Gardiner, and the *Westminster Gazette* under Spender? Only the *Manchester Guardian* survives, and, by surviving, proves conclusively that, given the will, good papers can still play their part in an otherwise demented and distracted world. Scott has passed away, but his paper is alive, and this encourages the more optimistic amongst us to hope that, despite appearances,

"Another Athens shall arise,
And to remoter time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
The splendour of its prime."

VII

But, even given the will, the conditions that just now obtain in that "Fourth Estate of the Realm" are not exactly conducive to the production of the older kind of newspaper or periodical. Those were the days of indepen-

dently owned newspapers; and, usually, one man owned one newspaper. But, save in isolated instances, that system no longer prevails. We have trusts and combines and syndicates and what not. It is all very, very complicated, and I, for one, do not pretend to be able to unravel the maze with any degree of satisfaction, either to myself or to my readers. Its intricacy defies description.

In 1923, for instance, the *Daily Mail* Trust declared a circulation of the newspapers comprised in it among thirteen million readers. The Berry Trust announced a weekly circulation of over eight millions. As Mr. Gardiner observes:

> "It would not be an exaggeration to say that half a dozen men, representing two or three great syndicates, have access to most of the homes in the country. Where Lord Rothermere is not, there is Lord Camrose, and where neither is, there is Lord Beaverbrook. .....In the provinces it is only here and there that there is a survivor of the independently owned and independently edited type of morning newspaper which a generation ago was the commonplace of British journalism". (See Mr. A. G. Gardiner's article, "Two Ideals in Journalism", in the *Nineteenth Century & After.*)

VIII

Elsewhere the same writer tells us something of these trusts and combines of which mention has al-

ready been made. It is to be found in his pen-picture of that other noble lord, Lord Rothermere, the brother of Lord Northcliffe. By the way, Mr. Gardiner is at his liveliest when he lets his mind play on these modern Colossi. Says he:

> "He (Lord Rothermere) built up the vast network of systems that, with its interlockings, alliances, and subsidiaries has changed the whole face, structure, and spirit of modern journalism.....And from that centre (the *Daily Mirror*, that is) his financial evolutions radiated out in ever-widening circles, incorporating the *Daily Mail* system, plums from the Hulton system which he bought and disposed of with profits on a regal scale, and shares in the Beaverbrook system.
>
> The whole structure of finance recalls the House that Jack built. The *Daily Mirror* controls the *Sunday Pictorial*; together they control the *Daily Mail* Trust; the *Daily Mail* Trust owns 51 1|2 per cent. of the deferred shares of the Associated Newspapers, Ltd., which owns the *Daily Mail, Evening News, Weekly Despatch, Overseas Daily Mail,* and I know not what else. Then the *Daily Mirror* and *Sunday Pictorial* control the *Daily Sketch* and the *Sunday Herald* and the Empire Paper Mills. 'The only simple part of the story', as the financial expert of *The Nation* observes in unravelling these mysteries, 'is that Lord Rothermere controls the whole lot by control-

> ling the *Daily Mirror*. With the minimum personal risk—merely by owning more than half the 700,000 £1 ordinary shares in Daily Mirror Newspapers, Ltd.—Lord Rothermere now controls five newspaper companies, with a combined share and loan capital of £7,355,437, valued on the Stock Exchange at £24,000,000. The public put up the big money and Lord Rothermere kept control' ". (*Certain People of Importance*: Dent: 1926: P. 240.)

" Before such an achievement in finance ", Mr. Gardiner continues, " the only attitude is one of respectful abasement." He concludes:

> " He (Lord Rothermere) is not a personality of significance, but he is a power of immense significance. In himself he is—in spite of many amiable traits of public benevolence—negligible. As the master of the greatest machine of publicity the world has ever seen, he is a sort of Fourth Estate of the Realm. The possibility of the association of such power with so unschooled and irresponsible a direction is not the least disquieting problem of democracy." (*Ibid*: P. 241.)

No words of mine, as will be seen from these quotations, could have done sufficient justice to the financial ramifications of present-day newspaper concerns. My head swims before these figures, and my heart aches at the misuse of such powers.

IX

I have yet to come to Lord Beaverbrook, the present Lord Privy Seal, and *his* evil genius. Before doing so, however, I should like to utter a word in another connection. Many persons may be led into entertaining the notion that because these noble lords control such intricate machines their minds must be quite out of the ordinary, that they must be magnoperative in their scope. Let me suggest to my readers that we are here dealing with *journalism,* not with finance—save in so far as, in this highly complex civilization of ours, things are so very much inter-related that, as Francis Thompson says,

> " . . . .thou canst not stir a flower
> Without troubling of a star."

A man may be a financial wizard, but that does not necessarily imply that he is to be equally trusted in the matter of owning or conducting a newspaper, or a chain of newspapers. Nature might not have intended him for that. In this world one can do only one or two things supremely well, and if, in one's arrogance, one takes upon oneself too much it is generally at one's own, or another's, peril. Besides, what is the actual record of these gentlemen? Have they established, beyond cavil, that, besides juggling with money, besides amassing colossal fortunes for themselves, they have done anything to enhance the prestige of journalism?

What intellectual or spiritual interests have they supported? What beneficent schemes have they

promoted ? What does *their* own culture amount to, in the first place ? What is their individual, or cumulative, contribution to human endeavour ? Are their names associated with any plans for the mental and moral uplift of those around them ? These are questions that one may legitimately ask of our Grand Moghuls. The answers to them, one regrets to have to say, will not be found to be altogether satisfactory. Their names have not been heard of in circles that count: *there* they have not made the least irruption. One merely ignores them and passes on—to the next item on the agenda, so to speak.

X

Massingham puts it forcibly in his paper on "The Press and the People," already referred to by me.

> "Now, if this world of ours has grown to be a newspaper-governed world, it is important for us all to know who rules this mighty kingdom, and how. Most of the conductors and writers of the earlier type of newspaper were pretty well-known. I put a few names together, almost at random, as representing both these types of journalist: Dickens, Thackeray, Leigh Hunt, Tom Hood, the Jerrolds, Justin McCarthy, Thomas Davis, Feargus O'Connor, Sala, Labouchere, Yates, Delane, John Morley, Richard Holt Hutton, Frederick Greenwood, Algernon Brothwick, H. M. Hyndman, and W. T. Stead; and

among the great newspaper-owning families, the Walters, the Lawsons, and the Lloyds. I might almost add Bright and Cobden, for they were closely associated with the journalism of their day. Nearly all these men might be called great. They were heroes of politics, social reformers, writers of world-wide fame, or journalists eminent for knowledge of their craft. *But almost the first discovery we make about the new rulers of the Newspaper Press is that they are very few, and that they are mostly obscure men, unknown for any achievement in literature or politics.*" (My italics.) (*H.W.M*: Cape: 1925: Pp. 130-1.)

Which is simply incontrovertible. "H. W. M." goes on:

"Now, if you took the trouble to examine the directing boards of the various newspapers comprised in such groups as the *Associated Newspapers* or the *Sunday Pictorial Newspapers* you would find them to be composed of gentlemen of whom you knew nothing whatever, and in whom, possibly, you would feel no sort of interest if you did. The names of the few men—Lord Rothermere, Lord Beaverbrook, and Sir William Berry—in whom is vested the power of directing these vast concerns, are certainly familiar sounds in yours ears. *But of their opinions on politics*

and government or of the gifts which qualify them to act as spiritual directors to millions of their fellow-countrymen, young and old, you know as much as I do—and that is just nothing at all. Some of them have seats in the House of Lords, but there, unfortunately, though their mouths may be ready to drop pearls of wisdom, they never open them." (*Ibid*: P. 131.) (My italics.)

XI

They, and their like, are our mentors. It is to them that we are expected to bow the head and to bend the knee. But what is the reason for this ? It is to be found in the strong business "tinge" which they have imparted to journalism. I have touched upon it before, and I am harping upon it again. What are known as " advertisements " have done the trick more than anything else.

In the older type of journalism they had either no place at all, or only very little. The idea was still in its infancy. Those papers set for themselves the task of appealing to the intellect : profits were a side-issue. That made all the difference. Thus they had more *educational* value. Commerce played no part in them : probably it was not let in even on the ground floor. The chief interest was politics, and every paper had its own label : daily it laboured to put forward its point of view as persuasively as it could. Then, having rendered ample justice to its *parti pris*, it devoted as much space as possible to the

arts, literature, and the drama. It was a *full* and *groaning* table that it spread before its readers, and they could help themselves to the dishes in a very hearty fashion, indeed. There was no rationing, and nobody starved.

But this paradise was not to last long. The serpent made its appearance in the form, mainly, of advertisements. *The point is that, not sales, but advertisements, pay the papers.* The paper which can "bag" the largest number of these prospers most: it is as simple as an arithmetical sum. But how to "bag" them? That, perhaps, is not so simple. Here step in our press magnates, with their millions, and multi-millions. Having money to burn, they can take all kinds of risks. They can, for instance, reduce the prices of their papers, as well as minimise the charges of advertising. The less financially backed newspapers cannot dream of doing that, without inviting disaster upon themselves. But these Nabobs, these Sultans, these Duces and Feuhrers, run no such danger: on the contrary, their audacity invariably pays them handsome dividends.

By the simultaneous reduction of which I have spoken they increase both the sales of their newspapers and the number of their advertisements. Gradually, by virtue of the larger sales, the advertisers will be inclined more and more to send their advertisements *only* to these newspapers. The sales and the advertisements act and react upon

each other. Monopolies are created; and the poorer kind of paper goes to the wall.

But the poorer kind of paper catered for the intelligence, ministered to the humanities, did it not? Yes, it did. But, even apart from the new ideals that our modern Napoleons have set before themselves, where is the space in their newspapers for the things of the intellect, for the pabulum of the mind? Charity, as Bacon says, will scarcely water the ground if she must first fill a pool. If advertisements *must* spread, like a rash, over every nook and corner of a newspaper's available space, how much of it will be left for a superior kind of entertainment? The question answers itself. "No birds were flying overhead: there were no birds to fly." It is a sort of vicious circle: the press magnates have encouraged the phenomenon known as advertisements, and, as though not to be backward in hospitality, advertisements have returned the compliment with compound interest. The next step was trusts and combines. On these the new journalism has reared its ugly head.

XII

Mr. A. G. Gardiner, in his article on "Two Ideals in Journalism," which he contributed to the *Nineteenth Century & After*, after the death of Mr. C. P. Scott of the *Manchester Guardian*, expresses all this better than myself:

> "It was not only the methods of journalism that were transformed by the irruption of Alfred Harmsworth into Fleet Street. The

whole structure of the journalistic system of the country was transformed also, not merely in the metropolis, but in the provinces..... Advertising on the modern scale was unknown, and the newspapers relied mainly on their local revenues .....Their main business was the accurate presentation of news, and their political point of view was confined to their leading columns. They indulged in no levities and were ignorant of the circulation-raising expedients so common in these days."

He proceeds:

"Upon this structure the impact of the journalism initiated by Northcliffe fell with devastating consequences.....The power of the new invader was increased by the enormous growth of general advertising and the extent to which his command of great national circulations enabled him to canalize that advertising into his own channels at prices which left the modest local newspaper gasping. *It was, of course, this monopoly of advertising which was the goal in view. Great circulations in themselves do not pay.*"

He hits the nail, squarely, on the head in the succeeding paragraph:

"It is the advertiser who makes the newspaper profitable, and the object of great circulations is to command from the advertiser the

highest possible price for the space he buys. . . . . It was this conception of the commercial possibilities of journalism and his translation of the conception into realities that is the outstanding achievement of Lord Northcliffe. From it sprang the mass production of journalism and the decadence of the independent press. There is only a certain amount of advertising available, and the more it is absorbed by the great circulation, the less there is for the small. The result is the aggregation of the popular press in few and fewer hands, until to-day it approaches the character of a monopoly."

CHAPTER VI

THE NEW JOURNALISM—II

I

My last chapter dealt with the new journalism. I have yet to "blow the gaff", as the saying is, on the *old*. I am aware, of course, that there is a certain discrepancy in my treatment of the subject. A purist may object that I have set about it the wrong way: that I have put the cart before the horse. I shall have to write a lot about the old journalism before I take leave of my book: the fun of the fair is still to follow. Meanwhile, some lacunae cry out to be filled in with respect to what I have been attempting to convey in the last two chapters. The plain truth is that I have not yet done with the new journalism. It is an immense subject, and, besides, it is "new": that, in itself, entitles it to more than a cursory treatment.

There is one aspect of it which is alike to its credit and to its discredit: that, I mean, which concerns itself with news. Modern science has placed in the hands of the new journalism facilities for the gathering and the publishing of news which, of necessity,

were denied to the old. Scientific advance has been astonishingly rapid, and it is no exaggeration to say that it has wrought miracles in the newspaper press as we have come to know it. The telephone and the telegraph existed even before. Now we have the wireless as well. What more can newsservices desire? They have inherited vast kingdoms, and it is up to them to see that they do not abuse their singular fortune.

As I have pointed out already, what is called propaganda arises directly from the ever-increasing channels for the collecting of news, and there is something about the word that induces an uneasy feeling in the minds of honest people. Propaganda is not always put to the noblest uses, and it not seldom happens that it is employed more to further an unworthy object than to facilitate a worthy one. This trait appears to be inherent in any new development: the Evil One rushes to cash in upon of it long before the other has even heard about it. I am, of course, to be understood as only *generalising;* and there may well be exceptions to the rule I have expounded. Undoubtedly, much good has accrued from the latest discoveries and inventions. Still, they have not been an unalloyed blessing.

With wireless added to it, the art of propaganda can rise to new heights, and has, in fact, so risen. But has it noticeably been in the service of that Arnoldian desideratum, "Sweetness and Light"? Have not our directors of propaganda

"bowed in the House of Rimmon" oftener than they need have done? Have they not bent a too servile knee to Baal? What is the earthly use of all this, then, when, broadly speaking, almost all its use is *mis*-use? Everyone has heard of the celebrated advice of *Punch* to those intending to marry: "Don't". I should like to repeat it in the matter of joining in the scramble for the employment of these new weapons.

II

There is such a thing as "nosing for news". By hook or by crook one must improvise fresh news daily for one's paper—the fresher, the better. This is also Lord Northcliffe's innovation: come what might, he would be the first in the field with news—good, bad, or indifferent. "What's wrong with the shop-window?" was one of his favourite sayings. If there was nothing but a trivial incident to report, —very well, even that would do, though every care would be taken to work it up into a major item, into a world-shaking event. Thomas Hardy once sang of himself:

"Any little old song
  Will do for me....
Newest themes I want not
  On subtle strings,
And for thrillings pant not
  That new song brings:
I only need the homeliest
  Of heartstrings."

Lord Northcliffe would pant and perspire for "newest themes," but, wherever there was a paucity of these, he would be content with "any little old song," though, with his usual artistry, he would contrive to give it a new tune if it was humanly possible. *Any* crime story would do, *any* street brawl, *any* financial scandal, *any* domestic tragedy: the power of discrimination—or, for that matter, a sense of decency—has never been among the new journalism's strong points. There is no doubt that this kind of thing appeals to some men's fancies: it appeals, especially, to the fancy of the typical John Bull—Lord Palmerston's "Fat man with a white hat in the twopenny omnibus"—and Lord Northcliffe knew his clientele very well, indeed, when he launched his familiar campaign for handing out unlimited dope to the unwary.

It is beyond question that he made the columns of his papers interesting: they were a riot, a scream, from beginning to end: they "went big" with the public. The moral lapses of the wealthy and the eminent are a perennial source of amusement to the man in the street: he can never have too much of gossip about the high and the mighty. Scandal and gossip and sport and sensation of every kind are to him what horses and dogs were to the gentleman in the tall white hat whom David Copperfield met on the top of the Canterbury coach:

> "'Orses and dorgs' (said that gentleman) 'is some men's fancy. They are wittles and drink to me, lodging, wife, and children,

reading, writing and 'rithmetic, snuff, tobacker and sleep.'"

These things, of course, spell a marvellous increase in the sales of the papers concerned: the press magnates become rich beyond the dreams of avarice, even if the populace is befooled hugely in the process. There is no "instruction", properly so called, in all this: it is a matter purely of "diversion", of "having a rollicking good time", from start to finish. The slogan is: "Give the public what it wants": the implication is that the public is interested in naught else. I venture to suggest that, even if there is a substratum of truth in this, it is, like the report of Mark Twain's death, "grossly exaggerated."

III

Plainly, the theory from which this has originated is that, from the point of view of circulation, there is nothing like what is known as "a human interest story." The more of these stories that a newspaper publishes the more it helps in pushing up its sales: a newspaper being a sort of replica of the life going on around and about it. There is democracy for you! Mr. Kennedy Jones, in his book, *Fleet Street and Downing Street,* from which I have culled a plum or two already, put it in a nutshell. "What sells a newspaper?" he asked. Unlike Pilate, on a famous occasion, he did not pause for an answer, but furnished it himself. "First war; secondly, a state funeral; and, thirdly, a first-

class murder." These be our instructors! Woe to a generation of men which has to take its cue from them, daily! Fed on this garbage the public right-royally lines their pockets.

It has come to this, that the monied person commands endless resources of monkeying with the multitude. It has been said of Socrates that he brought philosophy down from heaven to dwell amongst men. Contrast this with what our press lords have brought down from the eyries in which they happen to pass their existences! Here is the much-vaunted march of civilization, indeed! Shakespeare has recorded that "lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds." We are supposed to be the inheritors of *fulfilled* renown: we have imbibed the culture of twenty centuries: we stand on the shoulders of a whole race of giants: and this is all that we have to show, by way of result!

IV

The late Thomas Earle Welby, a journalist among journalists, was as much at a loss as myself to utter words of commendation on the modern newspaper. In his *Dinner Knell*, which, as he himself describes in his "dedication" to M. Andre L. Simon, "is a little book of table-talk by turns gastronomical, literary, political (though heedless of ephemeral politics)", he takes occasion to say:

> "Now, to bite the hand that has fed one is an ungracious performance, and as a journal-

> ist I would speak well of the newspaper wherever I may....It is the means of sending through innumerable minds ideas which otherwise would never find entry into them. It is, in this country, on the whole, astonishingly careful, clean and honest. But in its zeal to satisfy, *often after creating*, the appetite for information it is rather apt to overlook the possibility that not quite all of us need to be informed about quite everything." (My italics.) (Methuen: 1932: P. 89.)

Then he goes on to observe that those matters about which we are informed

> "ought to be such as we can relate in some way to ourselves, and not happenings quite meaningless to ninety-nine per cent. of those who read the paper. To read that at nine forty-five last night a woman, of whom I have never heard before, was knocked down accidentally in Camberwell by a motor-lorry, and so crushed out of recognition that her identity could be established only by the name on a garment—which was Hecuba, or should have been! I submit that I were better occupied reading an earlier obituary notice, of a girl equally unknown to me, but made for ever portion of my life by the poet's art, the obituary of Lucy:
>
> 'But she is in her grave, and oh,
> The difference to me!'

> Unless that cry can be wrung from us, we are but hardened and coarsened by the recital of disasters; and it is in vain, and indeed with evil results, that the headlines assure us of the presence below them of 'romance' and 'drama' and 'tragedy'." (*Ibid*: Pp. 89-90.)

VI

But Earle Welby is not yet finished with the subject. As a literary epicure turned journalist he is appalled by this base prostitution of a once noble art: the iron, obviously, has entered his soul. He is not done with his diatribe: gently he twists the knife in the wound. There is no malice in it. After all, it is an unwise parent that spares the rod.

So he continues:

> "'This story,' wrote Shelley of the material out of which he made *The Cenci*, 'is indeed eminently fearful and monstrous: anything like a dry exhibition of it would be insupportable.' But the dry exhibition of monstrous passions and crimes is almost the main business of the democratic newspaper to-day; and in earlier years I have had chiefs and colleagues who would be surprised to learn from Shelley the conditions which must be satisfied before the harrowing of our feelings, even with blunt harrows, becomes legitimate. 'Imagination is as the immortal God, which should assume flesh for redemption of mortal passion.' What a theory to propound to a

sub-editor, or to the three million readers of the *News of the World!* Yet if we cannot get that understood, all the 'romance' and 'drama' and 'tragedy' of the newspapers must merely weaken and in time destroy whatever popular capacity there may be for appreciation of the true romance, the true drama, the true tragedy. And that is what has happened. The popular newspaper (there are others) is the enemy of literature, not because journalists sometimes split infinitives or cherish an affection for the epithet 'phenomenal,' but because it encourages a habit of mind which renders the appreciation of literature almost impossible." (*Ibid*: Pp. 90-91.)

VI

I have been at considerable pains to describe some of the attributes of the new journalism. I have dwelt (not tediously, I hope) on one of those attributes, the sensationalism that has almost become a kind of second nature with it. I have conceded that the many-headed seems to enjoy this stuff hugely: finding in it, presumably, some sort of compensation for its innumerable ills. Boredom must be combated at all costs, and those in whom lies the power should spare no trouble to bring as much sunshine into our lives as possible. We must lend a helping hand to our suffering brethren and thus strive to lighten their burden as far as we can. "It is", in the words of the imperturbable Sam

Weller, "a self-evident proposition, as the dog's-meat man said, when the house-maid told him he warn't a gentleman." But should we not be more careful about the means we choose towards this meritorious end?

Curiosity is not always ignoble. Man could not have made any progress in the world had this element been absent from his composition. From it have sprung by far the greater portion of our advances in any realm of knowledge. Curiosity, in a sense, is the father and the mother and the wet nurse combined of all speculation.

But there is a wise curiosity and an unwise curiosity: a becoming curiosity and an unbecoming curiosity. Eavesdropping, for instance, is not in the same category as curiosity proper. Neither is scandalmongering. How does it concern us whether *this* noble lord has lived up to the standard laid down by the Ten Commandments, or *that* noble lady has departed the least little bit from the code of morality that has governed her sex from time immemorial? How are we better for ascertaining the private lives of public figures? Why this unwholesome itch to peep into closed rooms ?

VII

The late Miss Katherine Mayo once wrote a book in which she attempted to do as much damage to Hindu India as she could within the limits of a couple of hundreds of pages. It was all excruciatingly entertaining, no doubt, and our English-

speaking friends—on both sides of "the pond"—had many a merry laugh at our expense. A prefunctory two-months' sojourn in our country revealed to her that we, Hindus, are (1) a cow-dung eating people, (2) are sexually pervert, and (3) are sexually impotent. If a slight hyperbole be permitted me, the German Feuhrer's *Mein Kampf* could not have sold as many copies in the Fatherland as Miss Mayo's *Mother India* did in England and America.

The cream of the joke was that even Americans —whose sole justification for marriage very often appears to be the divorce that almost inevitably follows it, like a corollary, and whose "necking" and "petting" parties, and whose national game of "strip-tease", are among their more celebrated pastimes, according to the author of *Uncle Sham*—the cream of the joke, I repeat, was that even the Americans were tickled to death at our so-called national failings: not stopping to enquire, in the midst of their jubilation, whether it was quite "ladylike", to put it no higher, to handle sexual facts and fancies as Miss Mayo had done in her *magnum opus*. Mahatma Gandhi gave a fitting reply to it when he characterised it as "a drain-inspector's report."

VIII

Now, I submit that Miss Mayo's masterpiece was one of the direct products of the new journalism. Constant dripping wears away even a stone, and

the daily doses of sensationalism that the English and the American papers have been in the habit of injecting into their readers these many years past cannot but be expected to leave their mark on their minds.

It stands to reason. Our environment largely shapes our mental outlook. The uncultured, like Miss Katherine Mayo and her numerous imitators, are the chief sufferers. A little learning, as Pope remarked, *is* dangerous: in especial, if that little is confined to an intensive study of the papers that swear by the methods of the new journalism. The half-boiled and the semi-baked intellects mistake these "drain-inspectors' reports" for the gospel "from on High".

The new journalism, then, begets a warped mentality: and to this warped mentality is to be traced the publication of books like *Mother India*, and *Slaves of the Gods*, and the rest of that objectionable *genre*. A whole literature—pernicious in every respect—has sprung from this new journalism. Its purpose is not to "hold the mirror up to nature." Its concern is to hold the distorting glass, rather: to reflect—and, often, with gross exaggeration—what is loathsome and hideous in society. Verily may we exclaim:

> "There's hell, there's darkness, there is the sulphurous pit, burning, scalding, stench, consumption; fie, fie, fie, pah, pah! Give me an ounce of civet, good apothecary, to sweeten my imagination."

IX

Life is short, so let us be merry while we can. Let us have a good time before we are called away—God knows where.

> "One Moment in Annihilation's Waste,
> One moment, of the Well of Life to taste—
> The stars are setting, and the Caravan
> Draws to the Dawn of Nothing—Oh make haste!"

Mr. Aldous Huxley gives us the proper reply to this in his book of travels, *Jesting Pilate*. He is coming out to India, and there are many other passengers in the steamer bound for the same bourne; and the gossip is mainly about the "good time" to be had in our country. Mr. Huxley describes it in his own way:

> "Everybody in the ship menaces us with the prospect of a very 'good time' in India. A good time means going to the races, playing bridge, drinking cocktails, dancing till four in the morning, and talking about nothing. And meanwhile the beautiful, the incredible world in which we live awaits our exploration, and life is short, and time flows stanchlessly, like blood from a mortal wound. And there is all knowledge, all art. There are men and women, the innumerable living, and, in books, the souls of those dead who deserved to be immortal. Heaven preserve me, in such a world, from having a Good

Time! Heaven helps those who help themselves. I shall see to it that my time in India is as bad as I can make it." (*Chatto & Windus*: 1926: P. 6.)

X

I have spoken of the spirit of curiosity and have suggested that there is a noble as well as an ignoble brand of it. My point is that the new journalism has gone "all out" to foster the latter. This specialisation in sensationalism has led to a variety of evils. Pornographic books like *Mother India* are one off-shoot of it. That great *savant* of literature, John Ruskin, has a word to say on this subject. The passage occurs in his *Sesame and Lilies.*

He is at pains to draw a distinction between sensation-*seeking* and sensation-*mongering*. He is not against sensation as such. He is even *for* it. But, like the fastidious man that he was, he picks and chooses, retaining only the better part, and throwing away the worse. He goes to the extent of affirming: "The essence of vulgarity lies in want of sensation." He means that we must not be mere clods, that we must take an intelligent interest in the goings-on around us. While developing his argument he differentiates the right from the wrong kind: the vulgar sensation from the refined sensation.

He writes:

"There is a mean wonder as of a child who sees a juggler tossing golden balls. But do

you think that the wonder is ignoble, or the sensation less, with which every human soul is called to watch the golden balls of heaven tossed through the night by the Hand that made them? There is a mean curiosity, as of a child opening a forbidden door, or a servant prying into her master's business; and a noble curiosity, questioning, in the front of danger, the source of the great river beyond the sand—the place of the great continents beyond the sea;—a nobler curiosity still, which questions of the source of the River of Life, and of the space of the Continent of Heaven—things which 'the angels desire to look into'."

Then he draws his deduction:

"So the anxiety is ignoble, with which you linger over the course and catastrophe of an idle tale; but do you think the catastrophe is less, or greater, with which you watch, or *ought* to watch, the dealings of fate and destiny with the life of an agonised nation?"

He winds up with this peroration:

"Alas! it is the narrowness, selfishness, minuteness of your sensation that you have to deplore in England at this day;—sensation which spends itself in banquets and speeches; in revelations and junketings; in sham fights and gay puppet shows, while you can look on

and see noble nations murdered, man by man, without an effort or a tear."

XI

The question is: Whither are we bound? What is the meaning of this fuss, and to what destination does it lead? Is there more to it than meets the eye? This is the Newspaper Age, and we are fed upon whatever the newspapers supply. Science has placed in our hands the telegraph, the telephone, and the wireless. Like Ariel we can girdle the earth in a trice: space has no significance and money is no consideration. The devices at our disposal are many and varied. The modern printing machines can turn out thousands and thousands of copies of a newspaper in the twinkling of an eye: you have, so to speak, only to press a button, and the paper is complete before you, folded and wrapped.

Then there are the illustrations, which add a pleasing touch of verisimilitude to the reading matter provided for you. You feel you are face to face with the leading personalities of the world—persons "of importance in their day", as Browning would have called them. The poet's compliment may be a left-handed one also, inasmuch as some of those photographs may be of criminals, naked and unashamed, or of others whom we may compendiously describe as more or less "shady characters." Even if they are not such, still they may not be really eminent, after all, but may have caught the imagina-

tion of the public for the moment for a trivial reason—as that of winning a cup in a sporting event, or of coming out first in this competition or that. The multitude likes a paper

> "With pictures stuck in anyhow,
> And hardly any words at all,"

in the late Mr. G. K. Chesterton's vivid phrase. The "pictures", in fact, have succeeded in driving the "words" into a corner.

Many papers are only pictures, relieved of their monotony by a few words interposed here and there: reminding us of Falstaff's "one half-penny-worth of bread to an intolerable deal of sack." It is the "sack" that counts, not the "bread"; and the proprietors must be congratulated on having studied their market with an unerring instinct. It may be asked, of course, whether these illustrations, "stuck in anyhow", add even to the mere *appearance* of a paper, let alone to its value as a vehicle of important news and of intelligent comment. Here opinions may well differ: I, for one, do not think that they enhance its beauty. It is an unfortunate fact that we, in India, have been so closely imitating the Western press in this respect and spoiling our newspapers in the process.

XII

Personally, I can do without a *single* illustration. But, if we *must* have these things, let us emulate the shining example of the London *Times* which re-

serves the *last* page for them, and does not allow them to spread like a rash over the remaining sheets: these being set apart for reading matter, and for reading matter only. I am not here to be understood as alluding to the weekly "illustrated" periodicals: they frankly label themselves "illustrated", thereby leaving no loophole for any destructive criticism.

Even in these, however, the number of illustrations may, with advantage, be cut down to an irreducible minimum, and, in their stead, "the fodder of the mind" substituted. But I am dealing, principally, with daily newspapers, as well as with those weekly papers and monthly periodicals which have other functions to perform besides entertaining their readers with photographs of men and women and children in all poses, and in varying degrees of *décolletége*.

Even a picture should have its place. Some celebrity or other delivers a speech, or releases a "statement to the press", and we, the unoffending readers of the papers, are given not only those speeches and statements but a photograph of their author as well, *thrown in as a sort of bonus*—and, preferably (that horror of horrors!), with a cigar, or a cigarette, or a pipe, in his mouth! The fact that he is a celebrity and that, as such, we must have already become fairly familiar with his photographic likeness is brushed aside as though it were of no consequence. The fact that his photograph (with, or without, that incen-

diary in the mouth) was published in the paper only yesterday, or the day before, on the occasion of some other equally momentous pronounciamento, is also forgotten, or, if not forgotten, utterly relegated to the background: on the principle, apparently, of "the more, the merrier".

In some papers, again, there is a daily, or a weekly, "feature": an expert in his own chosen field devotes a column or two to the praiseworthy object of enlightening his readers on a topic that is nearest his heart. But while he is thus engaged in cleansing his breast of the perilous stuff that has accumulated there, the editor of the paper gives the whole show away by publishing his photo at the top of the page! Here, it will be seen, it is not a question of spoiling the ship for a "ha'porth of tar." It is an error of *commission,* and reminiscent of the man of whom the Bible speaks—*the man who went farther and fared worse.* This is, plainly, overdoing the thing. As Prince Henry characterised his one-time boon-companion, it is "gross as a mountain, open, palpable."

My point is that, without all these adventitious aids, the older papers were infinitely better than the new: that, with all these additional riches, we are really poorer than our forbears. We have not only put them to a wrong use: we have not learnt how to utilise them properly, in the first place. We have gone "ga-ga." We are squandering our wealth recklessly.

XIII

It is not enough to have a weapon in our hands. We must be conversant with its legitimate function. Else it becomes a boomerang and hits back. What is the earthly advantage of possessing all these time-saving devices if the time that we thus save is spent in improper pursuits? Mr. H. M. Tomlinson has expressed his conviction somewhere that a man can be a fool equally in Pelham and in Peking: if he is none the wiser after voyaging all the way to Peking, he had better have remained in Pelham. Thoreau declared long ago that it is not worth our while going to Zanzibar merely to count the cats. In other words, travel must issue in some tangible—or intangible—profit.

That was why it used to be undertaken even in the old days, when it was more a *travail* than anything else. Our forefathers considered it to be a liberal education in itself; and, indeed, it *was* that then! When Milton went to Paris and Florence and Geneva and Rome he really *broadened* his mind. He could not have composed his magnificent epic if he had not left his native shores: he could not have sung the song that oftentimes hath

> "Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in fairy lands forlorn."

Quite a few of his angularites still remained, it is true, as is evidenced by his famous letters to Salmasius. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that it

was a godsend to him. It was that to many others, besides—to Walpole, to Gray, even to Johnson, whose Odyssey extended only to the land of the heather and the bagpipes. But, after travel became not only easy but comfortable and quick, it ceased to be a liberal education.

It is the same sad story as regards the other amenities of life with which we are surrounded. No "brave new world" has resulted from them. Instead, the consequence has been that we have magnified, out of all proportion, the *inanities* of life. Take one instance only, which gives us an idea of the extent to which crime, and that modern invention, the wireless, can be exploited. We have heard of the Crippen case, which was once deemed to be such stuff as headlines are made on. The *Daily Telegraph* landed a sensational "scoop" when the Captain of a steamer bound for Canada wirelessed to it that he had seen the couple on board. Mr. R. C. Gretton, in his *Modern History of the English People*, comments upon this:

> "Not one savour of this incredibly dramatic turn of events was lost. Instead of the meagre fare of carefully doled-out clues, and the more or less blind interest in the case, here was the whole nation behind the scenes, watching (this was the thrill of the piece) those two fugitives in mid-ocean, and they, to whom alone it was life and death, alone unaware that they were already discovered."

XIV

That great and lovable writer, Mr. J. B. Priestley, puts the whole case for the prosecution neatly in the first volume of his autobiography, *Midnight on the Desert.* He is spending a few days in New York on his way to his ranch in Arizona.

> "There was plenty of organised and expensive gaiety at night. New shows were opening. *But people were excited rather than cheerful.* They were in the mood for hard, nervous, noisy plays with the maximum of obvious theatricality; machine-gun stuff in drama. They did not want to be quiet, even for a couple of hours. *They wanted more excitement on top of their own excitement. Nobody felt secure.*" (My italics.) (Heinemann: 1937: P. 36.)

He continues:

> "*This city of high towers, so radiant in the autumn sunshine, had no peace of mind.* It was moving along its time track towards an unknown destination. Nobody had a compass and a chart. The great buildings seemed contemptuously alien to the life out of which they flowered. In the Rainbow Room of Radio City, a warmed and scented mountain-summit, where the windows frame all Manhattan and leagues beyond, a peak of human ingenuity, a Babel that has escaped the ancient curse, we gathered at midnight to hear a

> woman at a piano sing dirty songs. *No age but ours could have planted that shining place so securely in the sky. No age but ours would have dreamt of using it as a temple of cheap smut*". (My italics.) (*Ibid*: P. 37.)

XV

I seem to have written "more than somewhat," in a phrase of Damon Runyon's, on what I have called the new journalism: in the course of which I have, I hope, made clear to my readers my reaction to it. Not being quite "ancient" myself I cannot pretend wholly to dislike it. The charge of "heaviness", for instance, cannot be laid at its door. There are pictures which relieve the monotony of the printed page: albeit, often enough, creating a monotony of their own in the process. Modern methods of printing have "smartened up" the appearance of the newspapers: although I have yet to come across a weekly which is as finely "got up" as the *Nation*, under Massingham. Even that old "see-green incorruptible", the *Westminster Gazette*, under J. A. Spender, with Sir Francis Carruther Gould's beautiful cartoons, did not exactly hit one in the eye. The *Morning Post* was picturesque to look at, and, among the monthlies, the *Fortnightly*, under W. L. Courtney, was as spruce as it well could be. The same applies to the now defunct *Edinburgh Review*—that "blue and buff" quarterly—under the late Mr. Harold Cox.

The passage of time has not, *invariably*, improved the appearance of papers: in some cases, there has been actual deterioration. Still, it can be maintained, with a modicum of truth, that the latest inventions of science have, on the whole, benefited them: for less outlay we get more bright stuff. We get *coloured* photographs, too, and this gives additional delight to the unsophisticated. But the new journalism has really much to answer for in the final reckoning. It has created the press lords: or, rather, the press lords have created the new journalism, with its plethora of advertisements, headlines, illustrations, sensations—and monopolies and combines and what not.

As a result of these syndicates and alliances, the old privately-owned, independent newspaper has, with just a few notable exceptions, disappeared completely. Almost all the papers are owned by three or four press magnates, who can thus scream their opinions to every nook and corner of their own country, first, and then to the rest of the world. In a most diabolical way they can *manipulate* public opinion. Even the ministers of the realm are not free from their attentions. During the last war it was seen how, in England, these press barons could make and unmake Prime Ministers. The Mother of Parliaments was also reduced to comparative insignificance by them.

The fall of the Asquith Cabinet in 1916 and the eventual resignation and retirement of the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith himself (later on, Lord

Oxford), is a classic instance. I have already written enough on the late Lord Northcliffe and on his brother, Lord Rothermere. I have made but a passing mention of that other member of the trinity, Lord Beaverbrook. In an earlier incarnation he had been Sir Max Aitken, a Canadian from New Brunswick.

XVI

Mr. Asquith's administration was a coalition government, and it rested on a sort of "Gentleman's Agreement" between Mr. Asquith and Mr. Bonar Law, the erstwhile leader of the opposition. Mr. Lloyd George had already put himself in the hands of Lord Northcliffe and his disagreements with his Chief had become an open secret. In other words, he and Lord Northcliffe had begun in right earnest the unholy work of undermining Mr. Asquith's position. Then there was Sir (afterwards, Lord) Edward Carson who, for reasons of his own, was equally intent on undoing Mr. Bonar Law. Now, having sketched this background, let me proceed in the words of Mr. A. G. Gardiner:

> "Sir Max Aitken, moved by his personal friendship for Mr. Bonar Law, conceived the idea of diverting the plot into another channel. His scheme was to unite Mr. Lloyd George, Sir Edward Carson, and Mr. Bonar Law, and eliminate Mr. Asquith. He first patched up the differences between Sir Edward Carson and Mr. Law, and then brought

> Mr. Lloyd George without, I imagine, any great resistance, into the conversations. Once begun on this promising tack, the loom of events worked rapidly." (*Certain People of Importance*: Dent: 1926: Pp. 40-1.)

Mr. Gardiner proceeds:

> "There were, as the author of *Lloyd George and the War* observes, almost daily meetings between the members of the triple alliance, with their plenipotentiary, Max Aitken, as their host or go-between, sending out feelers and acting as intelligence officer. There were breakfasts, dinners, suppers, numerous conclaves, *and when the moment had come to explode the mine, it was Max Aitken who applied the match.* One day the streets were aflame with placards announcing that Mr. Lloyd George was 'packing up' at the War Office, which was the signal for the assault. Forty-eight hours later Mr. Asquith had resigned, *and one of Mr. Lloyd George's first acts on taking his office was to convert Sir Max Aitken into Lord Beaverbrook.* It is not true that there is no gratitude in politics." (My italics.) (*Ibid*: P. 41.)

All these misfortunes are traceable to the concentration of power in the hands of a few press lords. *This is the new journalism.* May the Lord save us from it!

CHAPTER VII

THE OLD JOURNALISM—I

I

My mind took its colouring from the old journalism. Already the new journalism had made substantial inroads into the old, but it had not succeeded in ousting it from the field completely. The old journalism still retained its place behind its "hedgehog" positions of the *Manchester Guardian* and the London *Times* and the *Morning Post* and the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Nation* and the *New Statesman* and the *Spectator* and some other papers and periodicals. But the first-named paper has always been its undisputed leader.

If Lord Northcliffe was the accredited founder of the new journalism, C. P. Scott was as unquestionably the father of the old. It is to his eternal credit that even when everything seemed to be lost he remained at his post, four-square to all the winds that blew. He never wavered, and, in the end, the victory was his, decidedly. He was at his post when the press lord to be was yet a baby in his swaddling-clothes, and was there (without a hair of his hoary head being ruffled) when the press lord not only reached the meridian of his splendour but, in due course,

passed out of the journalistic sky altogether: having had his day and ceased to be, in the most literal connotation of the poet's words. Lord Northcliffe caused a huge ripple in the otherwise placid waters of the newspaper world, a ripple that disturbed their surface at almost every point; but, despite its ever-widening circumference, it totally failed to affect certain specified areas.

II

Scott contrived to conduct his paper throughout this period as though no revolution had taken place in his profession. He saw the storm raging all around him but remained undrenched and unperturbed himself—in a manner reminiscent of Gideon's fleece. He simply would not give in. His indomitable example encouraged the thinning ranks of the old school and they held their banners aloft till the bitter end. The others fell by the wayside, but not before firing their last round of ammunition. Scott could keep on without any mishap, because he was not only a journalist like those others, but was the proprietor of his journal as well. Spender and Massingham and Gardiner retired beaten notwithstanding the valiant fight they put up, along with Scott, owing to this handicap—that though, as editors, their power was immense, it was not immense enough: inasmuch as there were proprietors above them who were the ultimate court of appeal and who could thus set at nought their principles and policies as and when they deemed necessary.

Spender and, later on, Massingham and Gardiner —like Barry and Garvin in our own day—had to resign from their positions and to go out into the wilderness. As for Massingham, the proprietor, or proprietors, aimed the blow at a vital spot—for he died shortly afterwards, a heart-broken man: the *Nation* was his life's work, and when he was deprived of its editorship, he declined into deseutude and never recovered. Scott was more happily placed and the *Guardian* is still alive and kicking though it has passed out of his family, on account of the untimely death of his son and successor, Mr. Edward Scott, in very tragic circumstances. Its present editor, Mr. William Crozier, however, is worthily carrying on its traditions. (Since writing this, news has reached us that he suddenly passed away on April 16, last.)

III

Mr. Gardiner has recorded about Scott, in the article he contributed to the *Nineteenth Century & After* after his demise, and from which I have already quoted twice or thrice :

> "Scott made the *Manchester Guardian*, but it is also true in a sense that the *Guardian* made Scott. The two names were interchangeable, and it was impossible to think of the one without being aware of the other. Every newspaper that achieves success of any sort must have some personal inspiration, even if it is only a passion for power at all costs or for prosperity at any price. But the *Manchester Guardian*

under Scott bore the signature of a personality more definite, sustained and forceful than anything in the records of the world's daily journalism. The concurrence of the man and the vehicle had in it something not wholly fortuitous. Circumstances might almost be said to have dedicated Scott to his life's task before he was born. When John Edward Taylor founded the *Manchester Guardian* in 1824 he was engaged to the sister of Scott's grandfather, and the two families, though widely separated, became linked by the subsequent marriage. Both belonged to the Unitarian connection, which, never large in numbers, was always marked by an intense intellectual life, an austere morality, and a grave attitude to public affairs. The proscription under which Non-conformity still laboured had bred in it a stern and unheeding self-reliance and a spirit of detachment from the general current".

IV

This extract from Mr. Gardiner's eulogy gives us a sufficiently revealing glimpse of the man. Here was one who lived, as ever, "in the Great Taskmaster's eye". From the first page to the last the *Manchester Guardian* derived inspiration from him. He was the *fons et origo* of everything that was great and good in the paper. Being a supreme artist himself he was able to attract towards him men who could be relied upon not to let the English language down. He was not only the proprietor

and editor of the *Guardian*: he was decidedly the most gifted writer in it besides. He chose his men after due deliberation—after weighing them, so to speak, and finding them adequate—and, after choosing, gave them almost a free rein.

Nearly every journalist in England who was destined to shed a lustre on the profession subsequently worked under him at some stage of his career or other; and he could shed such a lustre because he *had* thus worked under him. Scott was a grand trainer. It used to be said of him that he would be on the trail of a man long before he selected him. Never had he to regret his choice. He discovered a genius in his son-in-law to be, C. E. Montague—next to him the biggest gun on the *Manchester Guardian's* staff. W. T. Arnold, and Leonard Hobhouse, and James Agate, and G. H. Mair, and Ivor Brown, and A. N. Monkhouse, and Herbert Sidebotham (the famous "Scrutator" of the *Sunday Times*, and now, alas, no more !), and Neville Cardus (the distinguished writer on music and cricket)—to name only a few—all passed through his mill. It was a feather in anyone's cap to have been able to boast: "I learnt journalism at the feet of Charles Prestwich Scott." *Without being aware of it, Scott founded a school of journalism*: the university was the office of the *Manchester Guardian*.

V

No wonder that Mr. J. L. Garvin (late of the *Observer*, and himself of the race of giants) was moved to write in his paper on the death of Scott:

"Scott, of the *Manchester Guardian*, was the greatest editor who ever lived. When he came to that journal nearly 60 years ago, he found it a provincial organ not first even in local repute. He made it known throughout the world; and the whole world had to reckon with it. This was a most extraordinary achievement. It could not have been wrought had not the man of ideals been at the same time a consummate technician. *There has never been any editor like him for discovering and training men. He brought out brilliance like diamonds from the blue clay.*" (My italics.) (*The Observer*, January 3, 1932: "A Power has Passed": P. 12.)

Mr. Garvin goes on:

"No one in his (Scott's) time did so much to teach the exact and perspicuous, yet elastic and idiomatic, use of that marvellous and difficult medium, the English language. He banished pomposity and banality, but he made lively simplicity the antithesis of the common-place. The *Manchester Guardian* became from end to end *the best written journal in our tongue*, and this distinction appeared in its treatment of literature, music, art, sport, commerce no less than in its high politics; and with the social scene it dealt like Dick Steele. *You could not imagine a more civilised human being than C. P. Scott*". (*Ibid.* My italics.)

VI

Scott detested exuberance in expression, and dealt mercilessly with any luxuriant growths that manifested themselves in his subordinates' work: he did not scruple to cut to the bone. Matthew Arnold said of Wordsworth's simplicity of diction that " it was bare, but only as the mountain-tops are bare ". A simple style is not, as some imagine, an insipid style. There is an ornament that pertains to simplicity, and there is a simplicity that is, at the same time, scholarly.

There is, I am aware, a widespread notion that the more grandiose the language is, the lovelier, *ipso facto*, is the style. Prince Henry observed of Falstaff that he was "a tun of a man". There are writers who will go *any* length to introduce " a tun of a word" into their compositions. They are all for magnificence in writing, being followers in real life of that well-known character in Messrs. Stevenson's and Osbourne's *The Wrecker*, Jim Pinkerton, the typical hustling Yankee. Turn to his comments on the word " hebdomadary ".

> " That's a good catching phrase, 'hebdomadary', tho' it's hard to say. I made a note of it when I was looking in the dictionary how to spell ' hectagonal '. ' Well, you're a boss word ', I said. ' Before you're very much older I'll have you in type as large as yourself '. And here it's, you see ".

" A boss word "—that is it! That is the ideal of many writers: boss words and long sentences:

sentences that, as the late Mr. G. K. Chesterton happily remarked of De Quincey's, " lengthen out like nightmare corridors, or rise higher and higher like impossible eastern pagodas ". (*The Victorian Age in Literature*: The Home University Library: 1913: Pp. 24-5.) Thomas Huxley once expressed his horror of "plastering the fair face of truth with that pestilent cosmetic, rhetoric". And it is this rhetoric that Scott, like Massingham and Spender and Gardiner in their several ways, abhorred from the bottom of his heart.

VII

Scott would have agreed with Hazlitt when, in his well-known essay, "On Familiar Style", included in his *Table Talk,* he writes:

> " The proper force of words lies not in the words themselves, but in their application. ....I hate anything that occupies more space than it is worth. I hate to see a load of band-boxes go along the street, and I hate to see a parcel of big words without any meaning in them". Everyman Edition: Dent: P. 244.)

That is to say, we ought to exercise a wise economy in words, as in everything else: there should be a self-restraint in language, what Walter Pater, I think, calls " the beauty of a frugal closeness of style".

That is what Stevenson meant when he advised the late Sir Edmund Gosse in the following terms.

The occasion was a perusal of the latter's *Father and Son*, which that budding critic and biographer had sent him. Stevenson, in his letter of acknowledgement, says:

> "*Beware of purple passages*.... And, in a style which (like yours) aims more and more successfully at the academic, one purple word is already too much; three—a whole page—is inadmissible. *Wed yourself to a clean austerity*: that is your force. Wear a linen ephod, splendidly candid. Arrange its folds, but do not fasten it with any brooch. I swear to you, in your talking robes there should be no patch of adornment; and where the subject forces, let it force you no further than it must." (*Letters of R. L. Stevenson:* Vol. III: Pp. 70-71: Tusitala Edition.) (My italics.)

Elsewhere also he writes to the same effect:

> "*There is but one art—to omit!* If I knew how to omit, I would ask no other knowledge. A man who knew how to omit would make an *Iliad* of a daily paper." (My italics.) (*Ibid*: Vol. II. P. 271.)

VIII

I can go on singing the praises of a simple, elegant, English prose style till the cows come home. *That is the backbone, not only of English literature, but of English journalism as well.* I have been harping on this matter of a good style from the very commencement of my book. Learn to write correct,

clear, idiomatic English and, if the gods favour you, you can reach the topmost rung of the journalistic ladder. The greatest editors had other qualifications, besides, but this was their highest. Those other qualifications undoubtedly helped, but only because that *highest* qualification was already there. While attempting to combat the notion that Dr. Johnson was more a conversationalist than an author, that fine critic and essayist, Mr. Robert Lynd, asserts, valiantly:

> "The truth is, Dr. Johnson built up his fame with his writings, and put a tower on his fame with his conversation". (*Dr. Johnson & Company:* Hodder & Stoughton: P. 46.)

We may say of the greatest editors that even if they had built up their fame with their other qualifications, they could put a *tower* on their fame with this qualification—of having possessed an unimpeachable prose style. It so happens that if the editor himself is an expert in this art, all the others who are privileged to write in his paper also manage to become very efficient craftsmen by sheer emulation, as it were. It is like the law of the Medes and Persians: it has never been known to prove false. *Scott set the standard which the members of his staff had to follow.* He did not encourage them to burst

> "Into the glossy purples that outredden
> All voluptuous garden roses".

On the contrary, he bade them to cultivate an austere, a controlled, expression—the sort of expression that made Addison and Goldsmith and Cowper and Swift and Hazlitt and Lamb and Cobbett and Thackeray and Stevenson famous in their day. What W. T. Stead tells us of his one-time partner on the *Pall Mall Gazette,* Lord Milner, was equally true of Scott. As everyone knows, Stead was among those who looked askance at the unpretentious kind of writing: belonging, as he did, to the "Corinthian" school. But Milner would have none of it: he was always for "curbing" his partner's "magnanimity," in Keats's celebrated phrase. So Stead complains:

> "He (Milner) would squirm at an adjective here, reduce a superlative there, and generally strike out anything that seemed calculated needlessly to irritate or offend. He was always putting water into my wine. He was always combing out the knots in the tangled mane of the *Pall Mall Gazette,* and when the lion opened his mouth, Milner was always at hand to be consulted as to the advisability of modulating the ferocity of its roar.... His task was most useful, but when he pruned he sometimes cut to the quick, and the victim smarted while his offspring bled."

IX

In this matter I am with Scott and Milner wholeheartedly. Milner had exquisite literary taste, while

Stead was not conspicuous for possessing it, his mind having been unprovided with a critical sieve. Scott, owing to his unfailing insistence upon this sound canon of English prose style, imparted to his paper a dignity, a decorum, that was not attained by any other daily either in England or in America —before, or since. The eulogies that he received on this score have been many and varied. Garvin's, which I have quoted already, is perhaps the most eloquent. Gardiner's, which I am reproducing just below, comes a close second:

> "No better written newspaper (than the *Manchester Guardian,* that is) was published in the language, and it bore the signature of Scott in all its departments, for he had an extraordinary gift of impressing his own enlightened and rational processes of thought and expression upon others. He was careful to catch his journalists young—if they had the flavour of Oxford so much the better—and he would stalk a promising undergraduate for a year. In this way he created the most remarkable school of journalism this country has seen. *To have worked for Scott was a certificate in Journalism equivalent to a first in Greats in the scholastic world.* Half the distinguished writers in English journalism during the last half century were licked into shape under the stern and discriminating eye of this martinet of the newspaper world. *He would have nothing slipshod, or garish.*

Rhetoric he disliked and emotion he discounted. High thinking must be expressed in plain, unadorned language and the appeal must always be to the reason rather than to the feelings. The air was a little cold, but it was always dry, pure, and stimulating. Occasionally, of course, a mettlesome steed like C. E. Montague would prance and curvet, and Scott would observe it with an aloof tolerance; *but his ideal was men of the type of Leonard Hobhouse who drove straight to the mark in clean, direct, unimpeded English*". (My italics.) (See Mr. Gardiner's article, "Two Ideals in Journalism", in the *Nineteenth Century & After.*)

X

Mr. J. L. Garvin, till lately the editor of the *Observer,* and himself an Irishman, once exhorted his countrymen in this fashion: "The first duty of an Irishman is to fight. The second duty is to fight. And his third duty is still to fight". In a similar fashion we may affirm that the first duty of a journalist is to write well. The second duty is to write well. And his third duty is still to write well. As Massingham puts it in his paper on "The Press and the People":

> "I was going to say that there was only one necessary art in journalism—the art of telling a story in clear, simple English—and only one indispensable man on a newspaper's staff, and

that is an inspired news-editor". (*H.W.M:* Cape: 1925: P. 137.)

Now I shall pass on to another point. The great journalist must have high principles: he must be prepared to adhere to them through good report as well as bad. This is one important difference between the old and the new journalism. The old journalism was not purely a materialistic business: while not disdaining monetary rewards it had other fish to fry also. There were certain well-defined ideas for which it stood, and, in standing for them, it feared no man's frown. Nothing could deflect it from its straight path of duty. It did not have one set of principles one day and a totally different set of principles the next: on the analogy, let us say, of your inveterate church-goer's Sunday suit of clothes and his more informal week-day attire.

It treated its clientele with respect: in other words, it did not regard them as mere pawns in a game—the game, that is, of its profits-making. It did not, at the same time, go to the opposite extreme of deifying them. It followed a sane, middle course. Clearly, the public had to be reckoned with: without it no paper could get on. even for twenty-four hours. A paper had to have popular appeal—*but no more than it must.* That appeal was aimed more at the intellect and less at the emotions—least of all, the cheap emotions. No responsible journal cared to indulge in short-cuts to success: the modern circulation-raising expedients were absolutely unknown.

The editor of a paper had a function to perform, and he performed it to the best of his ability. He was like the captain of a ship and had the same stern devotion to service. He was to shepherd it into its port, however stormy the seas through which it had to plough its way. He was not concerned with figures of circulation. If, in the normal pursuit of his vocation, the circulation of his paper showed marked signs of falling—well, he would take that calamity in his stride and go on with his work. It would never strike him to ring changes upon his policy even if stark ruin stared him in the face. That was the old journalist. What a contrast to the new!

XI

This is the place to bring Scott in again. As Mr. Garvin, in his obituary notice of him in the *Observer*, points out:

> "His (Scott's) lucidity of mind and expression, though admirable, could not by itself have achieved this power. Its stronger secrets lay in his height of character, his generous energy of conviction, his absolute moral fearlessness, and a quiet magnetism of personality more easily felt than described. For he was very composed in manner, though his steady fervour shone through. He had this advantage, that he was not only a great man but looked it.... The nobility of that memorable head was the true index to what

is, after all, the essential—the nobility, innate, of his mind, feeling, and sense of civilization." (*The Observer*: Jan. 3, 1932.)

This quality of Scott's was shared by Spender, Massingham, and Gardiner also. They were the ablest editors of their period, and they *all* belonged to the Liberal tradition; and, at one time or another, they all suffered for their convictions. The last three had to vacate their office. The highest price was paid by *Massingham*. He *was* the *Nation*; and when he was jockeyed out of his editorship, he pined away and died: it hurt him in the most sensitive place—the heart. Scott had always been both the editor and the proprietor of his paper: he was, therefore, never put to the painful necessity of resigning from his position.

Still, even he had to sail perilously close to the wind often: more than once he brought the *Manchester Guardian* to the brink of disaster, though, at the very last moment, as it were, he managed to avert it. This was especially so during the Home Rule crisis and the Boer War episode. By no manner of means could it be said of him, as Browning said of Wordsworth:

"He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!"

He was not only *not* the "lost leader": he was *the* leader. In the matter of Home Rule he was "foremost in the files of time." He was among the few

Liberals who supported Gladstone in the Home Rule split of 1886. As for the Boer war affair, he was definitely among the microscopic minority who did not subscribe to the philosophy of the

".....reeking tube and iron shard,"

but cast their vote against that expensive and inhuman adventure. Scott, by keeping himself and his journal rigorously aloof from that insane orgy of blood and lust, knew only too well that he might be ruining both, but, like all brave spirits, he did not count the cost.

XII

On the other hand, he went full steam ahead for what he deemed the correct procedure in the midst of that revolting Saturnalia: nor had he ever to regret his decision. Those who experienced some searchings of the heart were—the war-lords themselves. Here, again, let Mr. A. G. Gardiner take the floor. In that article of his on "Two Ideals in Journalism" which he contributed to the *Nineteenth Century & After* after Scott's death on New Year's day, 1932, while he was in the eighty-sixth year of his age, "A. G. G." writes:

> "It would be no extravagance to say of Scott as Wordsworth, with perfect propriety, said of himself that he was a dedicated spirit. He brought to the task of journalism a high gravity that gave to his paper a severe, even slightly ecclesiastical, air....He saw

that journalism was not merely a business in the sense that brewing or tailoring or soap-making is a business."

Mr. Gardiner continues:

"There was no question in his mind which consideration had to yield to the other to secure that harmony. When large issues were at stake, and what he held to be the cause of truth and justice was in one scale, and business advantage was in the other, he never hesitated. He was so frequently on the unpopular side that it might have been supposed he preferred it so and that he had a perverse love of opposing the general current. That was not the case. It is true that he distrusted the general current, had little sympathy with emotional impulses and adopted a detached and sceptical attitude to affairs. His feelings were always under the governance of the intellect. But he had no passion for conflict for the sake of conflict and was never happier than when the victory of reason over prejudice was won. He took great business risks, not under the spur of emotion, but with calculating firmness and with full appreciation of the possibly unpleasant consequences. The result at the time was often what he had feared. That was especially the case in regard to the Boer War, when he threw the whole weight of his journal into antagonism

to the popular current, and when the war passion ran so violently against him that both his house and his office needed at times the protection of the police. In that, as in most cases in which he took the unpopular side, he lived to see the wisdom of his policy affirmed, and the authority of his paper by that fact strengthened."

This could be said, not only of Scott, but of all the other three whose names I have mentioned side by side with his.

XIII

I have taken as my most typically representative man of the old journalism Charles Prestwich Scott, editor and proprietor of the world-renowned *Manchester Guardian*. He embodied in himself almost all the qualities that go to the making of a pre-eminent journalist. He was not a mere figure-head editor, as many of that tribe are, and have been, in England, but a *writing* editor. Besides, he knew how to choose his men. He was like a Generalissimo who could fight at the front as well as anyone serving under him. He invariably succeeded in assembling the finest journalistic team available; and this in spite of the fact that his journal was published, not in the metropolis, but in a provincial town. The *Manchester Guardian* was not only the leading paper in Manchester: it was easily the leading paper in England and in America. That gives us the measure of Scott's victory over material

circumstance. Even after Lord Northcliffe revolutionised the whole world of journalism, Scott remained as he was, and strove to let his paper remain as it was. Lord Northcliffe's was by no means a trumpery success. It was built on an enduring foundation, and, though he himself is no more, his handiwork is still with us, incessantly reminding us of him. But Scott was unaffected by all these innovations around and about him. Matthew Arnold pays this resounding tribute to the East in his *Obermann Once More*: the East when it was confronted with "the Roman Tempest", which "swell'd and swell'd" and "on her head was hurl'd".

> "The East bow'd low before the blast,
> In patient, deep disdain.
> She let the legions thunder past,
> And plunged in thought again."

Scott could have applied these words to himself in relation to the Northcliffean tempest which confronted *him*: which also "swell'd and swell'd" and "on his head was hurl'd". He was unperturbed to the last; and thus was in a position to exemplify in his own person that, given the will, the old journalism need not regard itself as a spent force before the impact of the new. Alas, there was only one Scott, and only one *Manchester Guardian!*

XIV

If we analyse Scott's greatness carefully, we shall find that it had its roots deep in the lofty ideals that animated him and in the unflinching *courage* that

supported those lofty ideals: the one without the other, of course, could not have availed him. Idealism must be *active*: there must be an *edge* to goodness, as Emerson says somewhere or other. Then only can it hope to wage a successful war against the forces of Philistinism. The tragedy of King Richard II was that his idealism was not militant, or was not militant enough. How could *anything* have helped him who could only cry:

"For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground,
And tell sad stories of the death of kings"?

Let us tell sad stories of the death of kings, by all means, and if the reciting of them renders us any appreciable relief: but, after this wild orgy of commiseration, let us also be up and doing: else the *status quo* will be perpetuated for ever. Scott was cast in the heroic mould and was out to combat evil—wherever he found it. He gave it no quarter; and was not afraid of defeat. He who, in a worthy cause, disdains the consequences wins in the end. Scott won—*in the end.* But, meanwhile,

"What labour, O Prince!
O Prince, what pain!"

Mr. Garvin, in his obituary notice of him, observes, in language as beautiful as it is just:

> "As a man of causes he was an editor militant and formidable, yet never crude in attack. He continued like no other man then alive the traditions of classic Liberalism. He loved justice, worshipped liberty, and hated

tyranny. A servant and soldier of humanity, he derived from a golden age of emotion and vision. The world changed altogether long before the end of his time. Through various necessities of modern life 'organisation' became on the whole a more powerful word than 'emancipation'. But salutary whether right or wrong, Scott always lifted the argument. Some who seldom shared his opinions were amongst his devoted admirers and learned not to be unworthy of his spirit when they disagreed with his letter." (*The Observer*, Jan. 3, 1932.)

XV

Scott's supreme virtue lay in this—that he was absolutely unselfish and never hankered after any recognition for himself: he did his duty, according to his lights, for his paper and for his party and for the world at large, and this sense of duty done—often amidst insuperable difficulties and discouragements—was ample reward for him. He was a simple and straight-forward man, and of such stuff are angels made. I cannot do better than conclude this chapter with another quotation from Mr. Garvin's article on him. Here, as will be seen, Mr. Garvin goes "all out" in praise of the master:

> "No temptation touching profit or vanity could make him swerve. He might have said with Chamfort: 'Honour, not honours'. He received no title nor additions, though no one

was more worthy of the Order of Merit. Wider and higher tributes than any Government can pay showed him worthy of a nation's monument and a world's monument. Some who remember him will transmit his example to another generation so that it shall be handed on to another yet. In that sense C. P. Scott has not passed. There is

'One great society alone on earth,
The noble living and the noble dead'."

Thus does royalty salute royalty!

CHAPTER VIII

THE OLD JOURNALISM—II

I

The high-priests of the old journalism were Scott, Spender, Massingham and Gardiner. Personally, I should like to bring in the name of Mr. Garvin also, for he belongs, essentially, to that epoch and to that school; but some qualifying and modifying clauses will have to be added, so he had better be omitted from this list. I have an abiding respect for him. He must be a distinguished journalist, indeed, of whom Mr. Shaw could write: "The revival of the *Observer* by Mr. Garvin after some rather desperate vicissitudes is one of the great journalistic feats of our time." Mr. Garvin is both temperamental and inconsistent. His inconsistency is not due to his being dishonest. He is very, very honest. He is very, very loyal—to the cause he has at heart at the moment. His "yea" *is* a "yea" and his "nay" a "nay". More than that. He deals in "russet yeas and honest kersey noes". But, then, the time is bound to come when, with equal sincerity, he feels compelled to swear by *a different set* of "russet yeas and honest kersey noes". The mood has changed, that is all, not the man. As Mr. Gardiner observes of him:

> "In all the tumultuous output of his feverish pen it is impossible to discover any underlying principle or theory of government. *There is no nucleus to this wonderful comet.* He is a visionary; but his visions have no coherence. They are as erratic as the lightning, and as intense". (My italics.) (*The Pillars of Society*: Dent: 1916: P. 227.)

II

After saying this, Mr. Gardiner goes on to detail some extremely glaring inconsistencies in Mr. Garvin's career. But he draws this inference from them:

> "Mr. Garvin's career is full of such startling episodes, and yet I repeat that his sincerity is above suspicion. He is always sincere: the trouble is that you never know what he will be sincere about. The typical fanatic is anchored to one idea. *Mr. Garvin is a fanatic on the wing.* He may be caught in this vortex to-day and in that to-morrow. *He is a reed through which everything blows into passion—an improvisor at the mercy of his theme*". (My italics.) (*Ibid*: P. 229.)

Mr. Garvin cannot be admitted into this galaxy—comprising Scott, Spender, Massingham and Gardiner—because, though he possesses in an uncommon degree most of the virtues that have characterised the old journalism, his nature is unbalanced and his views are thereby apt to be erratic and un-

steady. He is, not seldom, out for sensation, which runs absolutely counter to the unwritten laws of the craft that the quartette above-mentioned practised, and, in practising, adorned. He loves to write in headlines, and in *streamer* headlines at that. He aims at startling his readers. As Sir John (now Lord) Simon said when to the editorship of the *Observer* Mr. Garvin added the editorship of the *Pall Mall Gazette*:

> "He used to give us an electric shock once a week, now he gives us an epileptic fit once a day."

III

Mr. Garvin's prose is not, like Dr. Johnson's at his worst, sesquipedalian, but he can be extremely verbose. I am among those who have conscientiously perused the greater part of his four-column articles on the centre page of the *Observer*—alas, he is no more at his old stand on that paper—but I cannot help feeling that his writings would have been better for some merciless pruning. Having at his command a concise and scholarly prose style he will, on occasion, not mind blunting his instrument in the exigencies of his polemic. It is not merely that he has given up for a party what was meant for mankind, but that he has often given up sound prose for scintillating politics. With all that, however, he is as capable of controlled expression as the others on my list, and, as an editor, he is in the same class.

His discernment is uncanny. Once he happened upon a review of some new novels by a Mr. "P. C. Kennedy" in a certain issue of the *New Statesman*. He was so very much struck by its brilliance that he immediately instituted enquiries with a view to harnessing that fluent and fastidious pen to his own journal. Nor were his efforts unrewarded. Mr. "P. C. Kennedy" turned out to be no other than that remarkable essayist and critic, the late Mr. Gerald Gould; and for more than a decade his fiction-criticism was one of the high-lights of the *Observer*. Your first-rate editor must have a "sixth sense", as it were, for discerning merit wherever it can be found: Mr. Garvin, fortunately, satisfies this test up to the hilt.

The *Observer* is still functioning, but, after Mr. Garvin left it, it has become but a pale shadow of what it used to be under his aegis. The same sad story unfolded itself after the resignation of the other master-minds. Their papers are no longer what they were in their hey-day. We may, indeed, lament, as Cleopatra did after the death of Antony:

> "O, wither'd is the garland of the war,
> The soldier's pole is fallen: young boys and girls
> Are level now with men: the odds is gone,
> And there is nothing left remarkable
> Beneath the visiting moon."

The old order changes, yielding place to the new: yes, but not always to the *better*. Often enough, it

makes room for the worse. The giants cannot be replaced. "Literary critics", the late Prof. A. E. Housman tells us, "are rarer than returns of Halley's comet". So are renowned editors. Emerson says:

"When the half-gods go,
The gods arrive."

But what if the *gods* themselves go? Like Pilate on another occasion let us pause for an answer.

IV

I have stated that when Massingham left the *Nation* the paper drooped and languished. It did more than that. After a few months of fitful life it practically expired: the euphemism for that collapse being that it was merged in its rival, the *New Statesman*, which, after that memorable event, has come to be known as the *New Statesman & Nation*. (A wit remarked at the time that it should be christened the *New Station*.) Before becoming the editor of the *Nation* (which was really only the old *Speaker* under a different cognomen) Massingham had been the editor of the *Star* and the *Daily Chronicle*. He had been on the London staff of the *Manchester Guardian*. In 1901 he succeeded Sir Henry Lucy as writer of the *Daily News* Parliamentary sketch, "Pictures in Parliament", which he continued till he took up the editorship of the *Nation*. He entered journalism *via* the *Eastern Daily Press* of Norwich. He is to be remembered chiefly as the editor of the *Daily Chronicle* (1895-

1899), and as the editor of the *Nation* (1907-1923). He died in August, 1924, shortly after the *Nation* episode. Next to C. P. Scott, he was the greatest editor that England has ever produced.

I have suggested that a great editor must have lofty principles and that he must be prepared to pay *any* price in vindication of those principles. Scott, while often sailing close enough to the wind, had never to pay the ultimate price, as he was both the proprietor and the editor and so could not be dictated to from above. The others had to pay it, and Massingham most of all. He had to resign from the editorship of the *Star*, and then from the editorship of the *Daily Chronicle*, and then, once again, from the editorship of the *Nation*. He never hesitated, even for a second, when the question of principle was at stake. At the end he resigned from his party as well (the Liberal party) and joined the Labour group. For more than a decade and a half he had presided over the destinies of the *Nation*, in the process transforming it into the most glorious weekly in the English language, then, or thereafter. No wonder he felt the wrench. As Mr. H. M. Tomlinson puts it:

> "He did not want to go. The *Nation* was his creation, but he had to leave it as though it were a grocer's shop and he was the retiring manager. His jokes about it were outrageous. But he was badly wounded, for he was as tender-hearted as a sentimental girl". (*H.W.M:* Cape: 1925: P. 125.)

V

It is difficult to believe that Massingham is no more: difficult even now, two decades after his death. It shows the greatness as well as the lovableness of the man. Such spirits seem really to be immortal. Massingham was a live wire: he had what I may call the eternal freshness of youth. He was not only a journalist amongst journalists: he was, also, a man among men. His soul was like a star and dwelt apart. "Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird!"—thus Keats apostrophised the nightingale. We may well take a leaf out of the poet's book and say, unreservedly, of such as Massingham that they at least ought to be exempt from the calamities that assail our more ordinary selves.

Comparisons, I am aware, are odious; but I have no doubt that, in this ultra democratic age, it will do us immense good if, now and then, we pause to ruminate on the almost astronomical distance that separates us from those rare spirits whom a benign Providence periodically sends into our midst. The biggest of fallacies is that which assures us that all men are born equal. I have no quarrel with it except in the small (or large) detail of its being untrue to the grim facts of life. All men, unfortunately, are *not* born equal; and since it is the prevailing state of affairs we shall do well to salute those who are immeasurably above us—salute them as reverently as in us lies. Massingham was such a man. May he be saluted for ever!

VI

Massingham was, first and foremost, a journalist. I may go so far even as to declare that he was nothing else. He lived for journalism. He gave his all to it. It is a moot point whether it would not have gone better with him, in the end, if he had not so whole-heartedly identified himself with that hardest of task-mistresses. I have sometimes fancied that it would have been splendid, both for him and for us, if he had had the strength of mind to cold-shoulder the dame for long spells at a stretch. I am appalled by the consideration of what extraordinary talents are often placed at the service of journalism—talents that are not always rewarded as they ought to be. Unless the journalist in question takes to book-writing also, his fame has little chance of surviving him, has little chance of sailing unhurt along the stream of time: being, at best, confined to his own generation. Journalism, as I have already hinted, is a hard task-mistress: it takes all, or almost all, from others, and offers very little in return. It is, therefore, a pity that some of the finest intellects have given by far the major part of their abilities to it: to alter the words of the poet slightly, they have given up to journalism what was meant for mankind.

Massingham was not only a great journalist: he was a great editor as well. Now, this distinction is not so idiotic, is not so fatuous, as it may, at first sight, appear. Every editor is a journalist: every journalist, however, is not an editor—and what is

more, cannot be even if, like Humpty-Dumpty, he tries "with both hands". In an earlier chapter I quoted the opinion of Mr. Shaw about Massingham's editorship. A few sentences from that paragraph can bear repetition:

> "But Archer, like myself, was a journalist only, inasmuch as he wrote for the papers to boil his pot. Massingham was the perfect master-journalist: the born editor without whom such pot-boiling would have been for many of us a much poorer and more sordid business. If he had left behind him a single book, it would have spoilt the integrity of his career and of his art. I hope I have made it clear that this was his triumph, and not his shortcoming. I could lay my hand more readily on ten contributors for his successor than on one successor for his contributors. A first-rate editor is a very rare bird, indeed: two or three to a generation, in contrast to swarms of authors, is as much as we get; and Massingham was the first of that very select flight". (*H.W.M:* Cape: 1925: P. 216.)

VII

There is, indeed, no common ground of comparison between him and the others: you cannot, as the saying is, add four pounds of butter to four o'clock. When Massingham died, something went out of English journalism; nor has it yet been made good. The gap is still there, yawning like a

chasm. It may be true that there is nobody in this world who is, or whose services are, indispensable. In one sense, no doubt, it works out like that: the world goes on—or, rather, the work of the world goes on—though individuals disappear like raindrops on a window-pane. But this, I am afraid, is to take a superficial view of things. The work may go on, but what about the *quality* of the work? Surely, there is a deterioration there: sensitive souls can feel it, though they may not always be able to define it, to give it "a local habitation and a name". Mr. H. M. Tomlinson expresses it beautifully in his book, *Gifts of Fortune*. He is on the Chesil Bank, when a telegram arrives intimating the news of Joseph Conrad's demise. Mr. Tomlinson reacts to it in this fashion:

> "Somehow life seems justified only by some proved friends and the achievements of good men who are still with us. Once we were so assured of the affluence and spiritual vitality of mankind that the loss of a notable figure did not seem to leave us any the poorer. But today, when it happens, we feel a distinct diminution of our light. That has been dimmed of late years by lusty barbarians, and we look now to the few manifestly superior minds in our midst to keep our faith in humanity sustained. *The certainty that Joseph Conrad was somewhere in Kent was an assurance and a solace in years that have not been easily*

borne". (My Italics.) (Heinemann: 1926: P. 100.)

This is superb; and it can be applied in its entirety to the loss we have sustained by the death of Massingham in 1924. The certainty that *Massingham* was somewhere in *London* was an assurance and a solace in years that have not been easily borne.

VIII

I have written that Massingham is to be remembered chiefly by his editorship of the *Daily Chronicle* and of the *Nation*. Of his *Daily Chronicle* days I am not competent to speak. So I shall bring forward two witnesses that *are* to air their views on "that dark backward and abysm of time". Let the first be that distinguished publicist, and friend of India, Mr. H. N. Brailsford, who was a colleague of his on the *Nation*.

> "Day by day in the *Chronicle*, week by week in the *Nation*, his (Massingham's) sensitive mind sought to convey to his readers its own estimate of the values of life. He was striving for a humane civilization, and battling against every form of commercialism, vulgarity, and cruelty.....It was more than his personal love of literature which led him to develop that wonderful literary page which for some years made the *Chronicle* the newspaper of every young man and woman who was mentally alive. He did it because he was

resolved that the world of letters and thought should cease to be the possession of the leisured few. While other editors were beginning to make use of photographs, he gave distinction to the pages of the *Daily Chronicle* by reproducing drawings of Pennell, Burne-Jones, Walter Crane and Whistler. No estimate of his work which dwelt on his political influence alone would do justice to the breadth of his humanity. This appeal to ear and eye, this concern for prisoners and animals, expressed, no less than his advocacy of a Radical or Socialist programme, his ideal of a more sensitive civilization". (*H. M. W:* Cape: 1925: Pp. 93-4.)

My second witness is Mr. Vaughan Nash, who served under him during his *Chronicle* period.

" It may seem tall talk to be discussing him as King-maker, but those who are old enough to remember the *Chronicle* as it was will understand. With its freshness, fervour, and brilliance it ' flamed in the forehead of the morning sky '. Its appeal to the young and generous-hearted was compelling. Indeed, it must have seemed to them the authentic organ of Germinal. It was a power in politics. And if proof be asked that Massingham was no vain, freakish, irresponsible, or self-seeking person, we have it in his instant resignation when word came that there was to be no more criticism of the Government while the Boer

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> War lasted. To be dumb on such a question as this, which shook him to the depths, was not Massingham's idea of what the situation asked of him; and so in the autumn of 1899, he set forth, with the immediate members of his staff, turning his back on his beloved paper, in search of fields where his pen would be free". (*Ibid:* P. 293.)

IX

A great editor stamps, or imprints, his personality, so to speak, upon his paper: it pervades the paper from the first page to the last. Any journalist may, and can, "edit" a paper: it is only the born editor who can imbue it with his individual flavour. In this sense we can say: "O, the *Nation!* Mr. Massingham's paper!", or, "O, the *Manchester Guardian!* Mr. C. P. Scott's paper!" From this point of view, how many memorable editors does England possess now? I had better not give the answer: there would be too many wigs on the green.

Massingham, indeed, *was* the *Nation:* as he had been the *Daily Chronicle* before. I have let Messrs. Brailsford and Nash speak, from inside knowledge, of his *Chronicle* editorship. As for his editorship of the *Nation* (as I can myself testify from my own experience of that loveliest of weelies), I cannot do better than quote from Mr. H. M. Tomlinson again, who was his assistant during the last six years of his reign there:

"It was a little distracting, at first, to meet a journalist who was punctilious and inexorable about the very commas. Massingham never relaxed while the paper was being shaped. He could see a minor fault through a month's back numbers, and grieve over it. I have some conscience myself in these matters, but I loathed it at that time, especially in an editor....I thought they were of no consequence. Massingham thought they were. He would have been found recorrecting proofs if the heavens had fallen, and, being short-sighted, he would have thrust the almost illegible documents at the announcing angel, unaware, in his tension, that it was the last day. No young poet ever searched his trial efforts for what possibly might be of dubious import more closely than my new editor scrutinized the evidence and arguments of his paper, and the form in which they were to be presented....No need to fuss over the tidiness, polish, and readiness of a warship. And what a possession for lucky proprietors! To say they owned the *Nation,* as the King might say he had won the Derby, or an American millionaire that he possessed the finest private collection of Chinese porcelain in the world! If the *Nation* had been mine, I would not have changed it for a fleet of *Shamrocks* and the America cup. I would

> have valued it at more than ten new bays to a factory. There was not in the world, I used to imagine fondly, another review of quite the distinction and quality of the *Nation,* and certainly there was not one to equal it in its power to raise both furious enmity and grateful approval. But the Liberals cut Massingham because candour may be regarded as an uncomfortable shoe. A cosy notion, for there are plenty of boot-shops....But the *Nation* was Massingham; and I have tried to imagine the American millionaire indifferently regarding his precious porcelain as replaceable Staffordshire crocks". (*Ibid:* Pp. 122-3.)

X

This is a long quotation. But is it not worth its weight in gold? Mr. Tomlinson has made a name for himself as a kind of English Conrad; and has a reputation securely based upon more than one travel book and upon more than one novel. If *he* and Mr. Shaw, not to speak of the others, could bring themselves to eulogise the gifts of my hero in such superlative terms, what an unmistakable genius he must have been, indeed!

Mr. H. N. Brailsford concludes his article on Massingham thus:

> "No cold intellect could have wielded the influence which he possessed. The gift to move is not a rare one among writers who are content to play upon the traditional sentiment

which responds to the touch of familiar and consecrated words. His art was rather to evoke the shy impulses, the undrilled forces which obey no barrack-room words of command, the creative powers of a future still to shape. Behind this gift of emotion there was a nervous temperament, quick to feel and to suffer....He had no dogmatic religious belief, and would joke in his talk as boldly as Anatole France wrote. Yet in feeling (he was, above all, a man of feeling), he never lost his inherited religious outlook. *Even in the heat of party controversy he felt the moral issue at stake, and caught a glimpse of the divine tactic in history.* And so it was, alike in the last hours of vitality and in the dingy decline of English Liberalism, that this leader made history while he recorded it. With courage and his great gift of sympathy, he led his generation towards a kindlier and more sensitive society." (My italics.) (*Ibid:* Pp. 102-3.)

XI

That great writer on sociological subjects, Mr. J. L. Hammond, who was with him on the *Nation,* joins the chorus of praise with this full-throated contribution:

"There is a sense in which it seems superfluous to try to interpret Massingham, for he spent his life in making himself known. For

some 40 years he wrote day by day and week by week, and if a writer's influence is measured by the fascination he casts even over minds that habitually reject his premises, his arguments, and his conclusions, Massingham was undoubtedly the most striking and attractive figure in his world. At the end of his life he said to a friend with a shadow of regret in his voice that he had given everything to journalism. It was true. Few men have had his talents to give, and few men who had them would have given them with so whole a heart." (*Ibid*: P. 19.)

He goes on:

"*That he was the most brilliant and versatile of journalists*; that he could bring colour into the dreariest scene in politics; that even when his mood was tired or dismal he could put life and force into fatigue and despair; that he possessed, whether he was producing a leader or a paragraph, the secret of a perfect ease and harmony that seemed to owe nothing to artifice; that his style scarcely ever flagged or stumbled; that his sense for structure, sequence, phrase, turn, and rhythm in writing was quick and sure: these are propositions that would be questioned by few who read his articles, by none who ever worked beside him. *His less fortunate colleagues would admire and envy the variety and grace in which he*

could clothe the most unpromising and monotonous material with a few sudden touches of his sensitive pen." (*Ibid*: P. 19.) (My italics.)

XII

I shall stop here. I have quoted a sufficient number of authorities to prove what a gifted man and writer and editor the late Mr. H. W. Massingham was. As a feuilletonist he was unique: as Cowley said of Pindar, he formed "a vast species alone". (Mr. Shaw defines the word as follows: "The feuilletonist is the man who can write a couple of thousand words once a week in such a manner that everyone will read it for its own sake, whether specially interested or not in its subject, which may be politics, literature, music, painting, fashion, sport, or gossip at large.") The most readable columns in the *Nation* every week were those dealing with "A Wayfarer's Diary": that "Wayfarer" was none other than Massingham himself. Even the later "Back Numbers" and "Second Impressions" of the late Thomas Earle Welby in the *Saturday Review* and the *Week-end Review* pale into insignificance before Massingham's "A Wayfarer's Diary".

No words of mine can render justice to its dazzling beauty: its style beggars description. One instinctively turned to this column first: whenever it was not there one felt a sort of personal bereavement. "The Sicilian expedition,

is it, or is it not, the finest thing you ever read in your life ? "—so the poet Gray asks after reading again the Seventh Book of Thucydides. A similar question may well be put in regard to this "Diary". What Mr. Vaughan Nash has called that "instrument of his consolation and delight, his lovely liquid style with its cadence, poise, and rhythm", was to be met with at its very best and sprightliest there.

In this matter each one of us has his own preferences. Mr. Brailsford, for instance, opines that Massingham touched "the very sea-mark of his utmost sail" in the leading article. Mr. Nash seems to incline to the notion that his dramatic criticisms towered above his other compositions. Mr. H. W. Nevinson is equally vehement as regards the purely literary side of Massingham. All, of course, are unanimous in the view that in whatever he wrote his little finger, so to speak, was thicker than the loins of his fellows.

XIII

On this there can be no two opinions. The Goddess of Learning was by his side whenever Massingham took up pen and paper: as well as the Goddess of Music. But in his "Wayfarer's Diary" he attained heights which he himself seldom scaled on other occasions. It is, let me interpolate, no joke attempting to write a feuilleton. When Massingham left the *Nation* Mr. A. G. Gardiner carried on that feature in the paper. I adore Mr. Gardiner

"this side idolatry"; but it would be a mockery to assert that he succeeded in coming anywhere near to Massingham in the domain which Massingham made his own by a sort of divine right, as it were. After toiling in Massingham's wake for a few weeks Mr. A. G. Gardiner gave it up. Then the London Correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, the late Mr. Francis Perrot, stepped into the place left vacant by the resignation of Massingham and the retirement of Mr. Gardiner, under the *nom de plume* of "Kappa". Next to Massingham himself, he was the ablest feuilletonist in his time. Alas, he also is no more: "all, all are gone, the old familiar faces".

The following is Mr. Shaw's tribute to Massingham as a feuilletonist:

> "The technical proof that he (Massingham) was not condemned to editorship by inability to succeed as an author is that he proved himself one of the best feuilletonists in London. I was a feuilletonist myself exclusively; and he was the only editor who could do my job as well as his own." (*Ibid*: P. 210.)

Then, after describing what a feuilletonist is, he proceeds:

> "*Many able editors can no more do this than the Archbishop of Caterbury can preach Billy Sunday's sermons. But Massingham could.* His parliamentary feuilletons, his occasional theatre feuilletons, and finally his

Wayfarer gossip feuilletons were as good as any written in his time by men who made feuilleton writing their sole work in journalism". (*Ibid:* P. 210.) (My italics.)

XIV

I have pitched upon his "Wayfarer's Diary" as the high-water mark of Massingham's work. But he did not confine his writing to that "Diary". He would write leaders, theatre-notices, book-reviews, and sometimes—but rarely—"middles" as well. He never touched any subject that he failed to adorn. Literature was in his bones, and in his mind it contended with politics for priority of interest. But if politics won in the end, literature ran a close second to it. He never stinted space for literature in any paper he happened to edit. On this Mr. H. W. Nevinson comments:

> " As I said, the creation and steady maintenance of the Literary Page on the old *Chronicle*, and of the strong literary side upon the *Nation*, so long as he remained editor, were characteristic. He never tolerated the fashionable separation of literature, or of any other form of art, from actual daily life. His mind was keenly alive to beauty in nature, in pictorial art, in the drama, and especially in literature; but he detested the conception of an exclusive and cloistered beauty as a peculiar privilege of aesthetic and literary circles". (*Ibid*: P. 154.)

This "appreciation" of mine of Massingham is by way of being an affectionate memorial—albeit belated. I got much from him: it is only in the fitness of things that I should endeavour to repay, however inadequately, those manifold services. May his name shine for ever as a sort of beacon-light to guide the foot-steps of aspiring journalists!

CHAPTER IX

SOME IMPORTANT FIGURES—I

I

I SHALL now deal with the other figures of the old journalism, but in a less detailed way. J. A. Spender was the editor of the now defunct *Westminster Gazette,* a Liberal evening paper. He died only recently; but up to the last he had been in harness. On a point of principle he had also, like Massingham, to relinquish his position on his old journal. It was as editor of that that he first came into prominence. I, for one, cannot bracket him with Scott and Massingham. He was more a Whig than a Liberal or a Radical. He was, in his own fashion, a diplomat. When the Liberal Government was in office, he was its principal journalistic mouthpiece. He loved to work behind the scenes, and his influence was immense. As a leader-writer he was head and shoulders above most of his colleagues. He possessed an easy, flexible style. His journalism was almost wholly political. After he left the *Westminster* he turned his attention to book-writing. He was the author of the standard biography of Campbell-Bannerman, and he wrote one or two volumes on Lord Oxford also: he has published some miscella-

neous works on politics, as well as an extremely delightful book, *The Memoirs of Bagshot*, which deserves more attention than it has received. After the untimely demise of Mr. Herbert Sidebotham (the famous "Scrutator" of the *Sunday Times*) he was engaged as the main political writer in that esteemed weekly. As a political biographer, and as the editor of the old *Westminster*, his fame is assured.

II

We must thank "whatever gods there be" that Mr. A. G. Gardiner is still in our midst. He had been the editor of the *Daily News* for a considerable time; and it was he more than anyone else who made that paper what it became: a tower of strength to the Liberal Party as well as to English journalism as a whole. In due course the Liberals threw him also to the wolves, as they had thrown Spender and Massingham previously. It looks as though the Liberal party was traditionally unable to distinguish between diamond and paste, between gold and sawdust. On this matter Mr. H. M. Tomlinson remarks caustically:

> "Try to imagine the Conservative Party imploring for the removal of Garvin! The Tories know they must put up with him. They may dislike him sometimes, but some sound instinct tells them that they are improved by the aid of scholarship, and convictions strong enough to face the opposition of friends; in short, by an original genius in

the editing of an organ of their party. The Tories are not so confident that the Lovat Frasers and his kind do their affairs much good. Imagine Northcliffe and the Tories with a Massingham on their side! Would they have let him go? Would they have worried because he was inclined to tell a Premier that the atrocities of Black-and-Tannery were best left to the Liberals? Would they have deprived him of his pulpit because he was willing and able at times to make a Ministry fear lest his bright quality should show their inconsistencies in a ridiculous light? The fact that a Minister had paused to wonder whether the Daily Mail had really noticed what he had done would not have worried Northcliffe to the point of discharging the journalist who had so easily drawn the eyes of the public. Tory newspaper proprietors are not like that. They know they cannot afford to be. It is only the Liberal Party, as the last election made clear, which can afford to dispense with the services of men like Massingham, Spender, and Gardiner". (*H.W.M*: Cape: 1925: Pp. 126-7.)

III

So, of course, Mr. Gardiner had to beat a hasty retreat. As an editor he also is not in the same class as Scott and Massingham; but he easily towers above the rest. His pen-portraits of eminent persons are justly famous. His *Prophets, Priests*

and Kings, his *Pillars of Society*, his *War Lords*, his *Certain People of Importance*, repay perusal even now, years and years after they first saw the light of day. Besides, he has to his credit a wonderful "Life" of Sir William Harcourt: the concluding chapter of that book is so exquisitely written that it is worthy of being committed to memory.

In addition, he is a charming essayist. Under the pen-name of "Alpha of the Plough" he wrote several "middles" in the *Star:* which have now been gathered together between covers in such volumes as *Leaves in the Wind*, *Many Furrows*, *Pebbles on the Shore*, and one or two others. Mr. Gardiner's style is bewitching. It appeals to the heart instantly. If, as an editor, he is not in the same street with Massingham, as an essayist he is not in the same class as Mr. Robert Lynd and Mr. J. B. Priestley. It was he, however, who helped Mr. Lynd on to his present position. He was among the first to discern Mr. Lynd's genius and, having done so, he appointed him as the Literary Editor of the *Daily News.* Though, as I have hinted, he is not, as an essayist, of the same calibre as Mr. Lynd, he occupies a unique position, nonetheless. As the late Mr. C. E. Montague observed, a range of mountains may not be the Alps, and yet have a career. Second-class essayists, like Mr. Gardiner, have also a special niche in the temple of fame. Let us give them our meed of praise, and pass on.

I may add that some years ago the *Daily News* and the *Daily Chronicle* merged their separate identities in what has since come to be known as the *News Chronicle*, ably edited now by Mr. Gerald Barry.

IV

The name of Mr. C. E. Montague has often been mentioned in these pages. This is the place for me to devote a few lines to him. He is also one of my heroes. He was the son-in-law of C. P. Scott. He was the chief leader-writer of the *Manchester Guardian*. He has been described as one of the most efficient leader-writers of his time, and as one of those very few who contributed to the raising of its standard. The majority of journalists have, by choice, or by compulsion, to keep their lights under a bushel, to be content to be so many violets 'neath a mossy stone, but as for leader-writers—why, anonymity is the badge of their tribe, the very condition of their being. But some of them, nevertheless, attain to such distinction that it is not difficult for practised readers to identify them behind their necessarily unsigned productions.

Most political journalists have a stereotyped way of writing. It has been said that everyone has his own peculiar style, just as he has his own characteristic cast of countenance. But this is one of those truisms that are not true. The generality of mankind are not original enough to passess a distinct

style. They but imitate that which is most fashionable at the moment: or, to adapt the phrase that Prince Henry applied to Poins's thought, their style "keeps to the road-way", not deviating so much as an inch from the prescribed line. Some more than common talent is needed to cultivate your own manner of writing out of the rubbish-heap of words that is lying about for everybody's use.

This is the first step in the process. The second is to make that chosen instrument of yours so distinguished and so very much a part of yourself that discerning readers can immediately recognise it to be yours wherever it is to be met with. This is not so easy as it may sound: this kind cometh not out but by prayer and fasting. Among such writers were Massingham and Montague. Montague was not as great as Massingham, but he, too, had an individual style that could be easily identified among a thousand; and he brought to leader-writing such gift as are usually bestowed on less perishable things.

To-day's leader is to-morrow's chaff. But the superb craftsman is he who does not disdain to give the whole of himself to the writing of it, knowing full well that it has, and can have, at most but a life of twenty-four hours, if even that. This is to have both a literary, and a journalistic, conscience. Montague was simply dead earnest on the leading-article, and he showered all the wealth of his irony on the *wrong* kind of leading-article. I refer my readers to his early novel, *A Hind Let Loose*.

V

Fortunately for him, as well as for us, Montague was an author also, and to posterity will be hailed only as an author. He belonged to the generation of Wells, Bennett, Galsworthy, and Conrad. Now, in any review of the novelists of the Edwardian and Georgian eras we usually come across the names of these four, but not that of Montague. But Montague brought to the writing of his books considerably more literary talent than any of the quartette of novelists just mentioned. Having been an active journalist for the greater part of his life, his output of books is, naturally, very small—only nine or ten; whereas the others have written books by the dozen.

Literary merit, we know, is not always directly proportionate to the number of volumes that a person publishes, or has published. A man may write only one book, but that one book may be precious as rubies. "The poems of Sappho", said Meleager, "are few, but roses". But, all said and done, bulk also counts in literature. It evidences fertility of imagination. Montague, then, wrote very few books, but I believe they are sufficient to ensure his fame—if not in the eyes of the "general public", at any rate in the eyes of those who are competent to judge. What, indeed, as the late Mr. Augustine Birrell furiously asks somewhere, has the "general public" to do with literature? In literary circles Montague is, and will be, remembered. His *Disenchantment* and *Dramatic Values* by themselves will keep his name fresh in the memories of men.

VI

Montague was a master of irony; and in the days when it was not fashionable—nay, when it was positively outrageous—to speak the truth, or to speak in favour of the truth, he bent all the energies of his mind to champion its cause. The *primum mobile* of his work was to cast out hypocrisy from public life. Of course, he did not succeed: no one can. Unless the whole temper of a political community changes fundamentally, people, even if they be of the calibre of Montague and Massingham, have little chance of success against corruption in high places. For, let us admit once and for all, there *is* corruption in high places; and it attained its apotheosis during the last war.

Montague waged an unceasing battle against it: and it is not to his discredit that victory failed to crown his efforts. Human nature must undergo considerable alteration before such things are possible. All the same, there is merit in fighting evil (of whatever sort): it requires a great deal of courage, and it bespeaks a noble mind. Montague, then, stood up for truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth: his irony was directed against whatever was false or underhand. Let us not minimise the importance of irony, either in literature, or in that allied art, journalism.

So long as it is put to the right use, it is a weapon of the very first magnitude against all kinds of uncleanliness in life. We need not bethink our-

selves of Swift in this connection. It is possible that at bottom he was a malignant person, and that the springs of his irony were consequently fouled at their very source. Leaving him aside, however, we may safely aver that irony, so long as its motive is to let truth have a fair innings in this world, is to be encouraged, and not discouraged. Montague's irony was of this description: falsehood, wherever found, was anathema to him.

"Antonio Stradivari has an eye
That winces at false work and loves the true".

VII

He had, to apply the words that Thackeray employed with reference to the Dean of St. Patrick's, in his famous *Lectures on the English Humourists:*

> "a genius wonderfully bright and dazzling and strong—to seize, to know, to see, to flash upon falsehood and scorch it into perdition, to penetrate into the hidden motives, and expose the black thoughts of men."

Now, this irony of his, as it is encountered in his books, is directed against two classes of persons: the politicians and diplomatists and journalists that actually contrive to engender war between nations, and the wrong kind of journalism and journalese. His first novel, *A Hind Let Loose*, for instance, is a rollicking fantasia on journalism, or, at least, on

journalism as it used to be once. What is the moral of this? It is " plain as way to parish church." He who runs may read it. It is to eradicate insincerity from journalism, and to improve the standard of writing, and, what is most important, to exalt only such persons to the responsible position of editorship as know how to wield a pen.

Montague died in 1929, just two or three years after he retired from the *Manchester Guardian.* Next to Scott, it was he who made that paper what it was. Alas, the giants are no more: and the profession itself has dwindled to the dimensions of "a little clan." The old journalism is dead: woe be unto us!

CHAPTER X

SOME IMPORTANT FIGURES—II

I

IN my first chapter I had occasion to mention the name of Mr. Gerald Barry, the present Managing Editor of the *News Chronicle*. He is still on the right side of forty-five, and, as an editor, is in the heroic tradition. I ventured to predict, earlier, that, had but fortune favoured him, it was very likely that the mantle of Massingham would have fallen upon him. Fortune, however, did not so favour him. He began his journalistic career as assistant to Mr. Filson Young, editor of the *Saturday Review*. In 1924, or thereabouts, he succeeded Young in the editorial *gadi*; and continued in it till 1930. During that period he transformed the *Saturday* out of all recognition: it approximated, as nearly as possible, to the *Nation* under Massingham. It simply coruscated with brilliant writing: with such stuff as "dreams are made on." Every issue was a literary feast, a battle of wits, almost. Wordsworth has written of the French Revolution:

"France standing on the top of golden hours,
And human nature seeming born again."

With some (pardonable) exaggeration, one may say the same thing of the days when the *Saturday* was the uncrowned king of English weeklies. English literature looked as if it were being re-born: anyway, to be young at that time was (to quote the Lake poet again) "very heaven". Mr. Barry gathered together under his wing some of the finest journalistic and literary talent available: Earle Welby, and Ivor Brown, and Gerald Gould, and Edward Shanks, and L. P. Hartley, and, above all, J. B. Priestley. Mr. Barry himself wields a fluent and powerful pen: the members of his team were, one and all, masters of English prose. Earle Welby, for instance, was a host in himself. He had spent the major part of his life in India, and, for a number of years, had been the editor of the *Madras Mail.* In politics he was a Tory of Tories. As I wrote in the *Week-end Review* after his untimely death on February 21, 1933, he did not spare our countrymen during his sojourn in our country; but, if he damned us, he did so in delightful language, and some of us could pardon his political lapses for the sake of the literary grace of his articles. It was Mr. Barry who really discovered Welby's genius. It is to his credit, also, that it was under his inspiration that Mr. J. B. Priestley flowered into an eminent essayist.

II

As ill-luck would have it, however, Mr. Barry had to leave the *Saturday* in 1930, owing, as in the case of Massingham and the rest, to proprietorial

zoolum. Lord Beaverbrook had just then inaugurated a furious campaign in favour of what he was pleased to term "Empire Free Trade", which, somehow, Mr. Barry could not bring himself to touch even with the longest of barge-poles. So he wrote straightaway in his paper that the noble lord's newest stunt was not *his* cup of coffee. Thereupon his proprietor, who found himself in the same tabernacle as Lord Beaverbrook, demanded from Mr. Barry that in the following week he should write a leader giving cent per cent. support to the latest political idealogy. That led to his resignation, and to the resignation of nearly his entire staff.

Within a fortnight, however, Mr. Barry brought out a new weekly, *The Week-end Review*, which he edited with consummate ability. In 1933, after three crowded years of glorious existence, it had to stop publication. I cannot do better than quote from Mr. James Agate's delightful autobiography, *Ego* (Hamilton: 1935), on this affair:

> "The rest of the story is tragic. For three years the *Week-end Review* under Gerald's brilliant leadership was the best-written and the best-read weekly review in the country. .... It is well-known that all literary reviews which have not the immemorial backing of the country parson and whose opinions are not so non-commital that they offend nobody, have a hard struggle for existence. The *Week-end Review* could not expect not to lose money during its first years and the losses

were diminishing. Nevertheless, the proprietor felt that it was time for somebody else to hold the baby, failing which publication must be discontinued. Once more Gerald did his utmost to obtain support, but this time it was not forthcoming. So the paper died, or rather was merged into the *New Statesman*, which, so far as individuality is concerned, comes to very much the same thing". (P. 323.)

Mr. Agate continues:

"I write this having just attended the inaugural luncheon of a new film organization which proposes to spend £120,000 on a couple of motion-pictures. I base my contempt for the highbrows on the plain fact that while they set their faces against anything built up on a basis of popular favour—entertainments like *Cavalcade*, and nine-tenths of our most flourishing newspapers—they will give no active support to a National Theatre or an intellectual enterprise like the *Week-end Review*. I am tired of their bleating in the one case and of their refusal to cough-up in the other!" (P. 323.)

III

As one who read the *Week-end Review* from its first number to the last I can testify to this eulogy of it from the pen of the foremost English dramatic critic now living. Mr. Gerald Barry has the art

of editing a paper at his fingers' ends. During the period of his editorship the *Saturday Review* hit a new "high". When he transferred his activities to the *Week-end Review* he literally surpassed himself. Leaving aside the *Nation* under Massingham, the *Week-end Review* was decidedly the best-written weekly that ever made its appearance in England.

This book on "Journalism" would be incomplete, would be a kind of broken arc, if I did not write a word about Thomas Earle Welby. In him has passed away the finest literary journalist, as well as literary critic, of recent times. There was very little of English literature of which he was not a discerning student, and there was practically no section of it on which he could not, if an enthusiastic admirer may be permitted to say so, write the heads off his contemporaries. In him immensity of learning and a charming style were combined as in no other author with whose productions I am familiar. The difficulty was, which to praise more, his erudition, or the matchless instrument that he contrived to fashion for himself as a suitable vehicle for that erudition. For, let there be no mistake, scholarship alone does not carry a man far: it is apt to be nothing, to be a mere expense of spirit in a waste of effort, if it is not accompanied by a lively pen.

I am of the opinion that, at any given point of time, there is rarely, or never, a lack of bookish lore. As long as this sort of fodder is available in fairly large quantities people will also be found existing who have consumed it with a frantic eagerness that

often puts to shame the dilettante reader, the literary bee who goes to this flower now for his honey, and, anon, to that, never pursuing his vocation in right earnest, never hanging on to it like grim death, but supremely satisfied if he but pick a morsel of information here and peck at a crumb there, just as his fancy prompts him. So that it not seldom happens that we meet with a sort of division of labour—those whose minds are veritable storehouses and arsenals of learning but whom the gods have not blessed with the gift of being able to "put it across", and those who cannot honestly boast of such formidable knowledge but who, nevertheless, have the knack of communicating to others whatever of it they do possess in a manner that is truly unforgettable.

IV

By a curious divine economy, in this world none has everything. To this general rule, however, Earle Welby was one of the few exceptions. He commanded a beautiful and quite individual style, and his articles invariably conferred a unique distinction on the journal wherein they appeared. His contributions to the old *Saturday Review,* and, later on, to the *Week-end Review,* were in a class by themselves: their equals were not to be found anywhere else. The editor who could secure his services was thrice blessed, indeed. Welby was the inheritor of such *fulfilled* renown that Mr. Desmond MacCarthy, when he was the Literary Editor of the *New Statesman,* used all his blandishments with a

view to annexing him to that weekly, but in vain: that brilliant young man, Mr. Gerald Barry, had prior claims upon him. What Welby wrote of the late Mr. Augustine Birrell can be applied to himself word by word:

> "Whatever the importance of the things said, considered as sheer criticism, we are always aware of being in the presence of a very distinguished and thoroughly mellow man, of one who both cares profoundly for civilization and takes every menace to it, every defiance of it, without undue seriousness". (*The Week-end Review,* April 5, 1930.)

He concluded the notice with this pregnant sentence:

> "Rare as good critics always are, we shall find a dozen before we shall find again the combination of virtues and graces exhibited by Mr. Birrell".

Well, that fits Welby himself to a T.

V

While in India, Welby, side by side with his day-to-day work as a political journalist, had been slowly but surely laying the foundation of a solid literary reputation for the future. Not content with the success of the hour he indefatigably pursued his more serious studies—studies that he prescribed for himself with unerring precision. In particular, he

became a close student of Swinburne. He published two valuable books on him—the first in 1914, the second (revised and enlarged and almost entirely re-written) in 1926. I have read the latter and can confidently assert that it is a masterpiece of literary criticism. Whatever he did not know about the author of *Atalanta* is not worth knowing: so that we may safely lay it down that when he died in February, 1933, there passed away from our midst the greatest authority on Swinburne that this age has produced. As "Richard Sunne" (Mr. R. Ellis Roberts) puts it in *Time and Tide* of March 4, 1933:

> "He (Welby) did not in the least mind having unfashionable tastes. He was one of the few critics to rank Arthur Symons at his proper value; and his book on Swinburne is a fine appreciation of an author whose present condition of disesteem is largely due to the fact that young men prefer the driven sands of waste land to the roaring of the waves of the unharvested sea".

VI

Welby's *Popular History of English Poetry* (first published by Philpot in 1923, and now by Methuen, 1933) is the best book on that subject to date. Then there is his *Back Numbers* (Constable, 1929), a collection of his articles in the *Saturday* on the old authors, which is his undoubted masterpiece. A sequel to that is his *Second*

Impressions (Methuen, 1933), which is a reprint of his articles in the *Week-end Review.*

I should like to devote a few words to Welby's style: it was *English* "of purest ray serene". It was his own. It was simple at bottom, but, whether simple or not, it was none of the easiest to understand if one was not already familiar with his twists and turns. It was at times, on a superficial view, a trifle involuted, a shade recondite, but his merit consisted in this, that, by a masterly sleight-of-hand, he could make it fit in with the general pattern of his prose, with what went before and with what followed after, as well as confer upon it an unmistakable and unrivalled balance, proportion, rhythm, what you will. Just as it has been said that there is a spot of perfect calm at the heart of even the wildest commotion, so it may be contended that even when he frisked and gambolled to his heart's content, his style conformed to the unwritten rules of that discipline without which no piece of composition can achieve any real distinction.

He was by nature eloquent: words came to his pen almost unsought—"in profuse strains of unpremeditated art", as it were. It must have taxed him sorely to "curb", in Keats's immortal phrase, his inborn "magnanimity", his *penchant* being rather, in that other equally immortal phrase of the same poet, to "load every rift with ore"—and to load it, too, as full to the brim as possible. The reason for whatever complexity there might, now and then,

have been in his writings was that he was at pains to be precise in his expression and, to that end, had perforce to drag in qualifying and modifying clauses by the scruff of their necks right into the "dead vast and middle" of his sentences. But, as I have already taken care to suggest, what in other hands might have resulted in more or less of clumsiness escaped that unhappy doom under his expert management, and, on occasion, even enhanced its pristine splendour.

He was not an inveterate phrase-maker like Mr. Ivor Brown, nor was he a habitual coiner of metaphors and similies, like the late C. E. Montague. All the same, he was a much better writer than either. When he was in the mood he could manufacture metaphors as well as the next man. Look at this specimen:

> "Meanwhile this man (Frank Harris), whose right hand could have managed the *News of the World* while his left massaged the heart of the *Athenaeum* into beating, had written some stories". (*The Week-end Review*, Sept. 5, 1931.)

Is there no phrase-making in this?

> "No bungling writer but has professed to be telling a plain unvarnished tale while getting ready vast quantities of the materials for varnishment. It was the distinction of Frank Harris in his best stories that he not so much wrote a story as made us 'God's spies' on

> human action. Make no mistake, it requires genius to do it. The plain tale by the plain man is always coloured. At his best in the telling of stories Frank Harris made himself simply a pane of glass through which we look". (*Ibid.*)

What I am driving at is that his writings did not need the aid of these things: they could hold their own with the best even without them.

VII

The literary criticism of Welby may be divided, broadly, into two parts: that which he wrote, originally, under his own name, or "patronymic", as he preferred to call it, and from the beginning with an eye to eventual publication: and that which he sent to the press under an assumed name and probably with no settled idea of subsequently gathering them together within the covers of a book, or a series of books. These latter, as he himself would have it, partake more of the nature of "table-talk" than of criticism proper, and were published as from "Stet". I cannot, at this moment, guess the nature of the compulsive force that impelled him to this curious dichotomy, unless it can be equated with an unholy desire to puzzle his readers, to throw dust into their eyes. I have, let me interpolate, less—considerably less—than my fair share of human inquisitiveness, but, at the same time, I must, to be candid, own to an inordinate curiosity to get behind a *nom de guerre* to him whom it essays to conceal: and I am

never more elated than when I successfully solve the riddle "on my own lonesome", as it were.

In this matter of "Stet" I was "flummoxed" for three or four months: "I sought it with thimbles, I sought it with care", but the hunting of the snark was trivial compared with this. Afterwards, however, I could prove by a sort of cumulative evidence —by diagrams, graphs, and the Law of Probabilities —that "Stet" and Welby were related so closely that "Stet's" right hand could not, in a manner of speaking, do anything without Welby's left immediately becoming aware of it. There are some tricks of style, of quotation, of the general approach to a subject, of the *tout ensemble*, in short, that will give away a writer ere many summers pass.

VIII

By this kind of "internal evidence" I had, in my time, been able to perceive that "Alpha of the Plough" was none other than Mr. A. G. Gardiner, that "A Wayfarer" was none other than Mr. H. W. Massingham, that "Solomon Eagle" was none other than Mr. (now Sir) J. C. Squire, that "Affable Hawk" was none other than Mr. Desmond MacCarthy, that "Y.Y." was none other than Mr. Robert Lynd, that "Richard Sunne" was none other than Mr. R. Ellis Roberts, and so forth and so on. The identification of Welby with "Stet" was rendered a little more difficult than usual because, besides a "back number" or a "second impression" from "Stet", there used, invariably, to be an article from the authentic Welby himself: and

since, in common practice, *two* articles from the same individual, however eminent, are not published in a given issue of a paper, or a periodical, the mystery became doubly mystifying. But when it was, ultimately, cleared, readers whose chief interest is literature must have, as "Richard Sunne" (Mr. R. Ellis Roberts) puts it in *Time and Tide* of March 4, 1933,

> "turned first to those two pages (in the *Week-end Review*, that is)—where 'Stet' gave us the freedom of his library and where Earle Welby considered in his review the claims of a book of the week to be more than a book of the moment".

He goes on:

> "Thousands must have admired the skill, the scholarship, the courtesy, and the occasionally devastating power of exposure, but I doubt if anyone who has not attempted a similar task can appreciate the sheer virtuosity, the endurance, and the apparent ease with which Welby performed his work. There was rarely any sign of fatigue or boredom in his articles: and he communicated his enjoyment in literature in a way that had nothing of the condescension of the school-master or the snob". (*Ibid.*)

IX

Though Welby wrote innumerable articles as "Stet", only a very small fraction of these has been included in the two subsequent publications that

were compiled out of them: *Back Numbers* (Constable, 1929) and *Second Impressions* (Methuen, 1933). As he himself declared, in his preface to the former, these are but the equivalent of "table-talk", these are so many "half-holidays" of a critic. I can vouch for the fact that this "table-talk" is delicious to a degree, and that those who read it as it appeared week by week, from 1927 to 1933, first in the *Saturday Review*, and then in the *Week-end Review,* must have been extremely eager to read it over again when it attained to the dignity of book-form. Some things do not grow stale by repetition. In a phrase immortalised by Charles Lamb, they belong to the class of "perpetually self-reproductive volumes—Great Nature's Stereotypes". Welby's "table-talk", as well as criticism proper, from part of this fraternity. There is a sort of "cut-and-come-again" quality about them.

By the time he has reached the last sentence of his two columns we have had such discourse as "never was on sea or land". What a large utterance the man had! He would take a theme and pluck the heart out of it before we knew where we were. Within his limited space he could spread himself as only an expert can. Indeed, he rarely gave one the impression that he was smarting under that handicap.

X

As Mr. Desmond MacCarthy pertinently observed, in his obituary notice of him in the *Week-end Review* of Feb 25, 1933:

> "I admired the art with which he combined in his essays the results of an inquisitive preoccupation with human nature and of literary judgment. Concision suited him. And what a fine compliment that is! Only the full mind can afford to express itself briefly. In my opinion the essays which appeared over the signature of 'Stet', and were afterwards published under the title of *Back Numbers*, are his best work. They are moderate and animated. The critic often enters his subject by a side-path, yet before he has gone far his reader finds himself at a point whence the most comprehensive view can be obtained".

Like all first-class writers, Welby could go to the root of the matter. He was responsible for some of the wisest criticism extant on Meredith, Kipling, Shaw, and Harris. I share with Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch a weakness for "men-at-odds and the unpopular cause"; and, having perused what was written on Frank Harris when his *Bernard Shaw* appeared, I was delighted to note that Welby at least kept his head. He had always a soft corner in his heart for Harris. He was never tired of rendering homage to him; and when he saw how Harris was being anathematized for his book on Shaw, and how Shaw himself was being canonised, he came out with a most glorious article in the *Fortnightly Review* for January, 1932, on "Frank Harris: Bernard Shaw: An Antithesis". Therein he was at pains to establish that, in the eyes of posterity,

Harris would be seen as a man of genius, while Shaw, the present hero, would be relegated to a second place, as but a man of talent.

XI

Before concluding my appreciation of Welby let me stress this most important fact about him as a critic, that, in Coventry Patmore's beautiful phrase, he "loved the lovely that are not beloved". He attempted to revive the fame of secondary poets, like Philip Bourke Marston, Arthur O'Shaugnessy, and Eleanor Siddal: besides those of Gordon Hake, Thomas Ashe, W. J. Linton, Mary Coleridge, Jeffrey Prowse, Charles Tennyson Turner, and Hartley Coleridge: most of whose names some of us might not have heard of, even, up to now. He was happy the while he did this revivalistic work. The reason was that he was so very much concerned for literature that he would not willingly let die any piece of work—if it had but the least merit.

In this connection it must also be stated that, in his view, one must not be too fastidious about choosing subjects for criticism: if one has the stuff in one, one can, if I may say so, treat even the minors in a major way. As he expressed it, in the *Week-end Review* of August 1, 1931:

> " Literature is doubtless not completely definable; yet there is this much to be sure about, that the personally-felt, fully and sharply apprehended, minor subject is beyond measure more valuable than the nomi-

> nally vast subject of which the writer is not in possession at all."

He clinches the matter in these memorable words:

> "A great writer makes the subject great; a good writer makes the subject good: and an ass makes the subject, whatever its magnitude in the mere enunciation of the titlepage, assinine. These things are so. Let us be glad of it". *(Ibid.)*

Let us be glad of it, indeed!

When Welby died, and when the *Week-end Review* ceased publication, the old journalism practically came to an end.

CHAPTER XI

JOURNALISM IN INDIA—I

I

It will be seen that I have devoted by far the greater part of my space to *English* journalism, reserving the indigenous variety to the fag end of my discourse. I do not think that I need offer any apology for this seemingly discourteous treatment. It is not merely that the latter is an offshoot of the former: even now, for various reasons, it has not attained a degree of excellence that merits a more detailed analysis. I am not to be understood as being contemptuous or arrogant. Indian journalism has had to fight an uphill battle all along. The odds against it have been, and still are, numerous and formidable. That, notwithstanding these almost insuperable impediments, it has been able to reach its present dimensions is an achievement, indeed! I am proud of it—as who is not? It has not only broken "its birth's invidious bar": the advance that it has made is really very considerable.

The language difficulty, in and by itself, would ordinarily have discouraged the faint-hearted. After all, it is not a joke learning to write in an alien

tongue: not least, in an alien tongue like the English. Dr. Johnson said about women's preaching that the wonder was not so much that they did not preach well, but that they preached at all. That we talk and write English even as we do is a huge compliment. The language difficulty, however, is only part of the story. A benign Government has added its own, by no means negligible, quota of obstacles. On the well-known principle of " 'E is a foreigner: 'eave 'alf a brick at 'im", it has been saying to itself: "These are a subject people: 'eave 'alf a brick at 'em." It has been heaving half-bricks at us, and at our Press, in especial, ever since it took over the duty of looking after our interests. A froward child *has* to be kept in check: one cannot dispute that statement. And so the Press laws have issued from the Central Government one after another in rapid succession, and they continue to flow in an unending stream from that inexhaustible fountain to this day. If they were sentient beings—these Press laws, I mean—the following verse could be applied to them:

> "The stubborn spearmen still made good
> The dark impenetrable wood,
> Each stepping where his foeman stood
> The instant that he fell".

The old gentleman in *Romany Rye*, it will be remembered, found his deliverance in studying Chinese; and I am almost inclined to believe that

our bureaucracy finds its deliverance in shackling the indigenous Press to its heart's content.

II

Indian journalism has survived this difficulty also. It is true that many papers have fallen by the wayside, and that many journalists have had, on occasion, to seek the hospitality of one or other of His Majesty's innumerable prisons. What of that? Indian journalism is still flourishing, and, let me hope, will go on flourishing for ever. It seems to bear a charmed life: like the camomile, the more it is trodden on the more it thrives.

The late Mr. G. Subramania Iyer was, and still remains, the greatest editor India has produced. He founded the *Hindu* of Madras and edited it for many fruitful years; and, after he left that paper, took on the job of editing the *Swadesamitran,* the leading Tamil daily in South India. Of him the late Sir C. Y. Chintamani says, in his book, *Indian Politics since the Mutiny* (Andhra University, Waltair: 1937):

> "He did for Madras, principally through the columns of the *Hindu* but also through the Congress and the Mahajana Sabha, what men like Surendranath Bannerjea and Motilal Ghosh did for Bengal, and Wacha, Tilak, and Gokhale for Bombay. He was the greatest Indian journalist of his generation and the greatest admirer of his writings was Mr. Hume. Mr. Hume wrote to Mr. Subramania Iyer that his articles would do credit even to the *Times* of

London, and he selected the *Hindu,* of which he purchased 50 copies, as the best medium of instruction of sympathetic members of Parliament. Pherozeshah Mehta and Dinshaw Wacha equally admired him, while Mr. Gokhale told me one day that there was no other editor in India who had the same masterly grip of public questions as Mr. Subramania Iyer. He was among the Indian witnesses before the Royal Commission on Indian Expenditure. . . .He wrote a very useful book entitled *Some Economic Aspects of British Rule in India".* (P. 49.)

III

After Mr. Subramania Iyer left the *Hindu,* the late Mr. G. Parameswaran Pillai and the late Dewan Bahadur C. Karunakara Menon in succession edited that paper; and both were brilliant journalists. Subsequently, Mr. Karunakara Menon started his own paper, the *Indian Patriot,* which he edited with great distinction until its demise, more than two decades ago.

Mr. Subramania Iyer, when he was editing the *Hindu,* had under him three men who *all* became famous journalists afterwards: the late Mr. Karunakara Menon, already referred to by me, Mr. K. Natarajan of the *Indian Social Reformer* (still, happily, amongst us), and the late Sir C. Y. Chintamani, the editor of the *Leader,* Allahabad, from the day of its inception to the day of his death.

Which goes to show that tuition counts for at least as much as the gifts one brings with oneself to the task in hand. In one sense of the term, indeed, the clay is almost nothing: the potter's hand is everything.

IV

It is to the credit of the *Hindu* of Madras that it has all along been the leading Indian-edited daily in the country. It has always had the good fortune both of excellent management and of excellent editorship. After some time the late Mr. S. Kasturiranga Iyengar took over the paper and edited it with distinction: after him came the two Rangaswamy Iyengars, S., and A. S. Both, alas, have, since, "crossed over".

If the *Hindu* has been more or less of an institution in the "benighted" presidency, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* holds an analogous position in Bengal. The late Babu Motilal Ghosh was not merely a brilliant editor: he was an inspired editor. One short, pithy sentence of his could damage his opponents more than whole leading articles of others. He would talk in parables; and, by so doing, would do more deadly execution in the enemy's camp than all his colleagues put together. His memory also would come to his assistance wonderfully. Among his victims was no less a man than Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India. He once, in his convocation address to the students of the Calcutta University, "spoke of truth as a Western virtue, and more than hinted that the Orientals, like the Cretans, were

liars, and that they were given to flattery, and other heinous sins". (Mr. A. G. Gardiner, in his *Prophets, Priests, and Kings:* Dent: 1914: P. 223.)

Babu Motilal Ghosh retorted by juxtaposing an extract from Lord Curzon's book, *Problems of the Far East,* with the offending passages in that speech. That extract revealed that Lord Curzon, in a previous *avatar*, had not, after all, been such a ferocious stickler for truth that he could be relied upon, at a pinch, to go through fire and flood, if need be, in its interests. The following is that extract:

> "Before proceeding to the Royal audience I enjoyed an interview with the President of the Korean Foreign Office....Having been particularly warned not to admit to him that I was only thirty-three years old, an age to which no respect attaches in Korea, when he put to me the straight question (always the first in the Oriental dialogue), 'How old are you?' I unhesitatingly responded, 'Forty'. 'Dear me', he said, 'you look very young for that. How do you account for it?' 'By the fact', I replied, 'that I have been travelling for a month in the superb climate of his Majesty's dominions.' Finally he said to me, 'I presume you are a near relative of Her Majesty the Queen of England?' 'No', I replied, 'I am not'. But observing the look of disgust that passed over his countenance I was fain to add, 'I am, however, as yet an unmarried man', with which

unscrupulous suggestion I completely regained the old gentleman's favour".

V

As Mr. Gardiner says, in conclusion: "India was dissolved in laughter. It almost forgave the insult for the sake of the jest". (*Ibid:* P. 224.)

Such was Babu Motilal Ghosh. He was the *Patrika*'s second editor: having succeeded his elder brother, Babu Sisir Kumar Ghosh, in that office. It was originally published in Bengali, but, to escape the consequences of the Vernacular Press Act, was changed over-night into an English paper: which was certainly a stupendous achievement. Dr. Johnson paid this superlative compliment to that celebrated actor, David Garrick: it is enshrined in a sentence which, as Mr. Birrell enthusiastically characterises it, will live as long as the English language itself:

> "I am disappointed by that stroke of death which has eclipsed the gaiety of nations, and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasure".

There would be no incongruity if this compliment were applied to the death of Babu Motilal Ghosh. It has, at any rate, eclipsed the gaiety of *India* and has impoverished *our* public stock of harmless pleasure. As the *Hindu* of Madras put it in its obituary of him:

> "Nationalists and publicists of all the colours will bear evidence to the uprightness and the independence with which the *Patrika* has

exposed every abuse in any corner of this country. And all this was lighted up with a lambent, playful, humour that never hurt. Serious contributions to the philosophy of politics may perhaps be hardly expected of any working journalist: but if a sure-footed perception of all the facts of a case, vigilance for the public interests in a country where they are only too apt to be betrayed by sheer *vis inertiae*, a watch-dog-like outlook for encroachments on the citizen's liberty and a keen appreciation of the need for unity of all the political elements of a subject nation, with a sure eye for the undying national ideals, constitute the glory of a journalist's life, that was Motilal Ghosh's in a generous measure, such as has been given only to a few among his contemporaries".

There will hardly be a dissentient voice as regards this eulogy. The *Hindu* concludes:

"Austere himself and a lover of the simple life, like his illustrious brother, his was an abiding influence of rare potency in Indian journalism, which has now fallen on evil days and is menaced with ever-increasing danger and darkness. Ill as we could spare him, the country will long cherish the memory of that weird figure which suggested a detachment from solid earth, that was at once a stern exemplar and a call to duty, from that

peculiarly Indian stand-point that he so loved to dwell upon".

VI

Surendranath Bannerjea was both a politician and a journalist. He presided over the destinies of the *Bengalee* for many a long year. He took it over from Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee, when it was a weekly. It continued to be a weekly for full seventeen years: then it was converted into a daily. Sir Henry Cotton once said of him that he could by the power of his tongue raise a revolt or suppress a rebellion. When "Surrender Not", as he was affectionately called by some, was near the end of his life he wrote his autobiography, *A Nation in the Making*, an excellent book of reference as well as an excellent book in itself: embodying, as it does, an account of fifty years of public life.

His memory was marvellous. He was elected President of the Congress twice and, on both occasions, "delivered very long addresses correct to a word, but without reference to the printed copy". During the later part of his life he was a Minister under the 1919 Act. It is well to remember that he originally belonged to the Indian Civil Service. It would appear that after adorning it for a few years he was dismissed for a technical error. Fortunately, it eventually turned out to be a blessing for the country.

Surendranath was one of the pillars of the Indian National Congress (old style). He remained a

Moderate or a "Liberal" till the day of his death. Before becoming a politician and a journalist he was Professor of English Literature in the Ripon College, which he had himself founded. His paper, after various incarnations, has ended as a Muslim League organ, with its name changed into the *Star of India*. Here is progress for you!

VII

Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha's esteemed monthly, the *Hindustan Review*, wrote of him:

> "Surendranath was connected with journalism for four long decades which witnessed the fusion of diverse elements into one great homogeneous and compact national party. As editor he exalted his office, position, and dignity. His attitude towards antagonists was scrupulously fair and he never lapsed into a petty provincial groove. He valiantly demolished his adversaries but never overstepped the limits of courtesy and propriety. The ceaseless battles he fought with the bureaucrats, whenever they encroached on the liberties of action and speech, will be gratefully remembered by all".

It is one of the high-lights of my existence that I had the honour of knowing Surendranath "plain". My father had been a life-long friend of his, and, the conversation at home almost always turning on politics and on the then public figures, even as a small boy I had the honour of hearing their names

ingeminated at all hours of the day; and Surendranath's used to be more often ingeminated than those of the rest. So it came about that one afternoon when I heard that that great man was about to pass through the Allahabad railway station, I prevailed upon my father to take me along with him so that I might have the privilege of feasting my eyes on him. Again, during my college days, this incident repeated itself—the scene being the same Allahabad railway station—and he advised me in stentorian accents: "You must be a Liberal till the day of your death". It brings out, by the way, his ruling passion. He was never a vain man, and this is my tribute to him, for whatever it may be worth. He will, however, be remembered more as a politician than as a journalist.

VIII

Mention must be made of the *Hindoo Patriot* of Calcutta, which had as its first editor Babu Harish Chandra Mukherji, and, as its second, that redoubtable genius, Babu Kristo Das Pal, of whom Sir P. C. Ilbert once said that as "a great orator and journalist he would have made his mark in any country and at any time". This paper made history in Bengal: as, later, it fell to the lot of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* to do. Kristo Das Pal was one of the greatest journalists and editors of any epoch and of any country.

In Allahabad, Dr Sachchidananda Sinha founded the *Indian People* in 1903: it was later on incorpo-

rated with the *Leader*, which began its existence in 1909, owing to the efforts, principally, of that revered son of India, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. In Lahore there was the *Tribune,* which Sardar Dayal Singh Majithia started way back in the 'eighties. One of its ablest editors was the late Mr. N. Gupta, who went over to Lahore from Allahabad where he was joint-Editor of the *Leader,* with the late Sir (then Mr.) C. Y. Chintamani. A later editor of the *Tirbune,* Mr. Kali Nath Roy, is also a journalist of the first rank.

The *Pioneer* of Lucknow and the *Civil & Military Gazette* of Lahore had, at one time, the distinction of encouraging the budding genius of that Imperial laureate, that bard of the banjo, that master of the drum-and-trumpet history, Rudyard Kipling. The former, for long, was more or less a Government organ: whatever it published was regarded as having come straight from the horse's mouth, as it were.

IX

A few words must be written about the *Times of India* of Bombay and the *Statesman* and the *Englishman* of Calcutta. The first-named was originally called the *Bombay Times.* When Robert Knight purchased it he rechristened it the *Times of India.* Shortly after purchasing it he left the Western Presidency to instal himself in Calcutta, where he bought the *Statesman.* He conducted it in unexceptionable style and it was then *really* "the

Friend of India". During those days there was the *Englishman*, also, a beautifully-written paper, which "ceased upon the midnight with no pain" nearly a quarter of a century ago. The men who were mainly responsible for putting the *Times of India* on the journalistic map were the late Mr. Lovat Fraser and Sir Stanley Reed, the latter of whom retired from its editorship many years ago. He still continues his journalistic activities, however, as its London Correspondent.

The *Statesman* had Sir Alfred Watson as its editor for some time: he had been connected with the old *Westminster Gazette* of London and had served under the late Mr. J. A. Spender. The association of Sir Alfred with that great Liberal journalist seemed to augur well for the future of the *Statesman*, but events belied that pious hope. He cannot now be distinguished from a true-blue Tory. In due course he left the country, and was succeeded by Mr. Arthur Moore: during his tenure the *Statesman* again became more or less a pro-Indian paper, and remains such even under Mr. Ian Stephens, who has taken over Mr. Moore's duties recently. When Delhi became the seat of the Government of India the *Statesman* contrived to publish a Delhi edition: as a journalistic venture this is unique in India.

X

The *Times of India's* nationalist outlook on Indian affairs dates from the days of Sir Stanley Reed,

whose editorship shed great lustre on the paper. Today it is very ably edited by Sir Francis Low. Since the present war began its editorials on the subject have been in a class by themselves. Its weekly "Letters from London" are also of an extremely high quality. Recently it has had the distinction of being the first newspaper in the country to have an *Indian* war correspondent.

Sir Pherozeshah Mehta founded the *Bombay Chronicle,* and under the brilliant editorship of Mr. Benjamin Guy Horniman it had what I may call its heyday. That gentleman, after many journalistic vicissitudes, has now transferred his activities to Bombay's second evening paper, the *Bombay Sentinel.* Its column of "Twilight Twitters" is decidedly the most exquisite thing in Bombay journalism: a long way behind comes the "Tete-a-tete" column of the *Chronicle.* The *Chronicle* is now edited by Mr. Syed Abdulla Brelvi, to whose credit it may be recorded that for over two decades he has contrived steadily to maintain the same high standard that had been set by his predecessor. It may also be stated that he has skilfully piloted his journal through really strenuous times, where a lesser man might have thrown up the sponge altogether.

CHAPTER XII

JOURNALISM IN INDIA—II

I

WHAT the *Hindu* is in the Madras Presidency, the *Leader* is, or, rather, used to be, in the United Provinces. When it first saw the light of day in 1909 it had two editors—the late Mr. N. Gupta, and the late Sir (then Mr.) C. Y. Chintamani. After a year or two the former resigned from his position to take up the editorship of the *Tribune* of Lahore. The latter continued to occupy its editorial chair till the day of his death (July 1, 1941), with but a brief interruption, between 1920 and 1923, when he joined the U. P. Government as a Minister under the Montford Reforms. When that interlude was over he went back to his old love. Journalism was his predominant passion, and though, with the passage of years, other interests also came to engage his attention, it must be said to his credit, to his intellectual integrity, that, even while sweating for them, he never wholly lost sight of his life's work but returned to it the moment he was emancipated from alien toil: I may put it that though, for the time being, those other interests "served to grace his

measure" journalism was "his real flame" all along, and wherever he happened to be. He could, with perfect justice, have repeated, with Ernest Dowson:

"I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion".

II

Let me say of Mr. (omitting the "Sir": he should never have accepted that accolade)—let me say of Mr. Chintamani that there were heights in him that he could not scale, circumstances being what they were. Compared with the English species, Indian journalism is still in its infancy; and though, with the passing of days, it is making remarkable headway, it would be foolish to bracket it with the former. But I dare to suggest that had Mr. Chintamani been elevated to the editorship of *any* daily in England, he would not only not have let himself and his countrymen down but would have shed such lustre on it "as never was on sea or land". It is opportunities that make a man; and in India, except perhaps in the domain of law, there is not a sufficiency of them in any field for her sons to lift themselves up from comparative obscurity to the empyrean of supreme success.

Unless the standards are extremely high, the ensuring results will not be high enough. In the country of the blind, we are told, the one-eyed are the monarchs. So far as journalism is concerned, ours is a country of the blind, and what successes we are privileged to have are so only on the above

principle. Mr. Chintamani was not capable of boasting, but if, in an expansive mood, he had repeated that excellent line of Drayton's,

"My thoughts bred up with eagle-birds of Jove"

—why, there would not have been much of incongruity in it because, in so far as those thoughts of his related to his beloved profession, they *had* "bred up with eagle-birds of Jove": but, having done so, they had not the means of realising themselves to the fullest extent, of "expanding" themselves, in Walter Pater's celebrated phrase, "to the measure of their intention". And more's the pity!

III

Let me paint a pen-picture of him, "in his habit as he lived", gracing the editorial chair. The entire office is hushed, there is only an hour or so to catch the train, and the paper has not yet been "put to bed", as the expression is. Probably there is news of first-rate importance, and Mr. Chintamani has been waiting till the very last minute to write his article. Then, when he has not a second more to spare, he seizes pen and paper, and the sentences rush upon one another at such a speed, at such a momentum, that one suspects that a Robot, not a human being, is letting them loose. The head-foreman himself waits upon him, and, as each slip is dashed off, he runs with it to the compositors, and almost by the time the last slip has been written, the proof of the completed article is brought in.

Mr. Chintamani is an expert proof-reader, and, with his flashing eyes, he not only corrects the proofs but makes whatever alterations he deems necessary while in the process of correcting them. Then, his whole face crimson with indignation against the diabolical principle in the universe that causes such delay in the transmission of news, and such muddiness in the heads of those who manage the Press department, he hurries to the place where the printing is done, and lays about him to such purpose that not a soul dares to look at him but, instead, works with all his might, and the paper which, otherwise, would have come out only four or five hours later is finished within the twinkling of an eye, and for that day at least everyone is saved. Mr. Chintamani was not less lovable when he was in his irate moods than when he was in his more genial ones.

IV

His work brought him into touch with almost all distinguished persons in the country, dead and alive, and he had a considerable acquaintance even among Englishmen and Anglo-Indians. What was more, he had a knack of piercing through the outer shell of their personalities and coming upon their real, their human, selves. And what he once learnt he *never, never,* forgot. The result was that he remembered uncommonly well whatever was significant in the lives of those with whom, during one period or another, he had come into contact, and even to listen to him, while the stream of his discourse

rolled on to its appointed end, was a delight in itself. Mr. Chintamani was a master of narration, and nothing that he ever wrote or spoke was calculated to tire the reader or listener. Even when, for the thousand and oneth time, he declaimed against the Congress and the civil disobedience movement, and, in the process, drew a too, too, flattering picture of his own life-long creed, "Liberalism",—that creed upon which he throve like a cedar of Lebanon,—even then, I say, he was not dull, but imparted to his audience something of his own fire, something of his own conviction.

As a conversationalist he had no peer, and to hear him holding forth in English was a liberal education in itself. Dr. Johnson said of Goldsmith: "He wrote like an angel and talked like poor Poll". Mr. Chintamani talked as well as wrote—if not exactly like an angel, at any rate like someone only a few degrees below an angel. He had never, I suspect, to wrestle with words; and had never felt English to be a foreign language. I wish, however, he had experienced greater difficulties with that tongue at the very commencement: for, then, he would have been a much more graceful writer than he was. Your rapid writer is not necessarily a good writer, and easy writing is not necessarily easy reading. "I write with ease", said the confident young gentleman to Sheridan. "No doubt", replied the great man, "but easy writing makes d—d hard reading".

V

I owe it to myself to write a few lines on Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha, the present Vice-Chancellor of the Patna University, an ex-Finance Member of the Bihar Government, a barrister of great eminence, and a journalist always. It was he who founded the *Indian People* of Allahabad and selected Mr. Chintamani as its editor. It was to him, again, that that excellent periodical, the *Hindustan Review*, owes its inception, and it has, by the way, the unique distinction of being the *first* monthly in India. It is a feather in his cap that it is still with us. It originally started as the *Kayastha Samachar* in July, 1899, and was then edited by the late Babu Ramananda Chatterjee, who was the Principal of the Kayastha Pathashala College, Allahabad, and who subsequently became the distinguished editor of the *Modern Review* of Calcutta.

In July, 1900 Dr. Sinha converted it into the *Hindustan Review*. From then on up to 1921 it was issued from Allahabad. Then, till 1925, it was transferred to Calcutta, under the editorship of Mr. K. C. Mahindra, as Dr. Sinha, during that period, had been performing the onerous duties of an Executive Councillor in his own province of Bihar. When he relinquished office his periodical was again removed to its place of birth, Allahabad: a few years later, however, it was transplanted to Patna. As he himself says, in his article, "*The Hindustan Review:* 35 years After", published in his periodical for July, 1934:

"It is a truism that the Indian Press is an exotic, that it is still fettered with many handicaps, and labours under many disadvantages. But, with all these limitations, it has made remarkable progress during the present century—in spite of the pernicious effects on it of the baneful Press Act, which was in force from 1910 till its repeal in 1922—and the more recent Ordinances and Acts. The *Hindustan Review* may justly claim that, during the now more than a third of a century of its existence, it has materially contributed to healthy progress in the country. Its contributors have been the most able and most distinguished Indian publicists. It is no reflection on any of our esteemed contemporaries in the periodical press of India to state the fact that this *Review* alone can claim to have published articles, especially written for it, by such great and distinguished leaders of the national movement as W. C. Bonnerjee, Dadabhai Naoroji, and several other Presidents of the Congress, besides several others who have been most prominent during the last three decades and a half in our public activities."

VI

Matthew Arnold pays this glowing tribute to Sophocles:

".....But be his
My special thanks, whose even-balanc'd soul,
From first youth tested up to extreme old age,
Business could not make dull, nor Passion wild:
Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole:
The mellow glory of the Attic stage;
Singer of sweet Colonus, and its child".

If in India, and "on this brink and shoal of time", these ringing words can be applied, in howsoever attenuated a form, to any person, then, I am certain, they can be applied to none other than Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha. He needs no introduction at my hands. He has won fame in more than one field of human endeavour. He was illustrious—before the present writer was born. In a sense, therefore, it would be the height of impertinence on my part to set myself the task of singing his praises. The worst of eulogising a man whose greatness all acknowledge is that one lays oneself open to the charge of presumption, of patronage, even. The path of the young, and even of the not-so-old, is beset with difficulties in every nook and by-way.

If by "malice aforethought", or, often enough, by sheer accident or negligence, they happen to fall short by so much as an iota of the reverence rightly due to grey hairs and proved worth, they are dubbed as impudent fellows who do not know their place in the scheme of things, and who are devoured by an overwhelming sense of their own importance. If, on the other hand, they are ready always to pay homage where homage is due, the taunt is levelled

at them, not infrequently, that they are consumed by that other ogre—presumption. It is no wonder that sometimes they are impelled to grow reckless, to throw the helve after the hatchet, and to be sublimely indifferent even before the spectacle of the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome. All the same, I am going to be reckless—in the opposite direction—and to acclaim Dr. Sinha as one of the biggest journalists and politicians that this country has ever produced. As well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb!

VII

I have the honour of Dr. Sinha's acquaintance. I have known him since my childhood. What is more, it was he who opened wide the portals of journalism to me. In a word, he was the first editor to publish my articles. There is no need to recount here the help he rendered me in that capacity. It did not matter to him that I had no adventitious advantage of any kind. It did not matter to him that I had been living—literally—in the remotest corner of the country. It did not matter to him that I could not bring an established reputation—and this is what counts most in Indian journalism—to bear upon the pages of the *Hindustan Review.*

By the way, Mr. P. G. Wodehouse—whose works Mr. James Agate has acclaimed as being "only a little below Shakespeare's and any number of times above everyone else's"—has this to say on the matter of established reputation. In his wonderful story, "The Artistic Career of Corky" (*The Jeeves'*

Omnibus: Herbert Jenkins), he makes the immortal Bertie Wooster remark:

> "Corky, the bird I am about to write of, was one of the artists. A portrait-painter he called himself, but as a matter of fact his score up to date had been nil. You see, the catch about portrait-painting—I've looked into the thing a bit—is that you can't start painting portraits till people come along and ask you to, and they won't come and ask you to until you've painted a lot first. This makes it kind of difficult, not to say tough, for the ambitious youngster". (P. 122.)

It does, indeed. But, fortunately for me, Dr. Sinha did not insist on an established reputation: he left it entirely to me to establish it, if I could, in his columns by taking due advantage of the opportunities he placed in my path. It was enough for him that I was tremendously interested in journalism, and that I could *write.* I should like to know how many editors there are in India who would be satisfied with these two qualifications only. I am happy that at last I am in a position to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.

VIII

The ideal poet, it has been said, asks:

> "From air and ocean bring me food,
> From all zones and altitudes".

In like manner, it may be argued, the full mind illustrates a theme from a variety of angles. Mr. A. G.

Gardiner has remarked in one of his essays: "Any peg will do to hang a hat on. The hat is the thing". Given the theme your versatile man will illuminate it in diverse ways. Dr. Sinha has thought deeply, and having been in the public life of the country for now more years than he may care to count, has arrived at certain mature conclusions. He has also read much, and, what is more, remembers what he has read. It is, therefore, in the fitness of things that his speeches and writings should provide such memorable reading.

What I like in them most is the *interplay* of politics and literature: the light each is made to shed on the other. We do not often come across it in India: though, needless to say, in England it is not such an uncommon thing. Dr. Sinha is an experienced politician. More: he is a politician who has enjoyed the responsibility of office. That is to say, he is not a mere wind-bag. By profession he is a lawyer: which means that he is not an "innocent abroad" in the matter of the worst that human nature is capable of. By inclination he is a man of letters. Some people are the poorer for such a wide dispersal of interests. In Dr. Sinha's case he has touched nothing that he has not adorned.

IX

I have written that what I like most in Dr. Sinha's speeches and articles is the interplay of politics and literature. I am reminded of what the poet Gray wrote to Wharton:

> "I have read Pausanias and Athenaeus all through and Aeschylus again. I am now in Pindar and Lysias: for I take Verse and Prose together, like Bread and Cheese."

I may say that Dr. Sinha "takes" *politics* and *literature* "together", "like Bread and Cheese". At the risk of emphasising the value of literature inordinately I repeat that we, in India, stand to *gain,* not to lose, by an interest in it, even while we are devoting the most of our time and energy to politics. Literature *mellows* everything it comes into contact with. It brings a sense of humour, of tolerance, of wide horizons, into our day-to-day life. It gives a *depth* to one's being. And that is why Dr. Sinha is able, alike in his addresses and in his writings, both to expatiate upon his particular thesis and to expound it in his particular manner. The idea as well as its expression are unexceptionable. I should like to reinforce my point by quoting a few sentences from Mr. St. John Ervine's article, "Greek Plays and Working Men", in the *Observer* of April 30, 1933:

> "A man can make money without any education at all, and, indeed, if we are to judge many men who *have* made money, we may justly suppose them to be nearly illiterate; and we shall grossly deceive ourselves if we hug the delusion that our worth in the world is to be measured by the amount of net personality at which our wills are sworn. I will not say that a man who can identify every wild flower

and bird's song obtains more pleasure from a country-walk than a man who cannot identify any, for the capacity to feel pleasure is not dependent on factual information, but I will say that this profitless knowledge, which cannot have added five shillings to many men's income, is a great aid to pleasure. *A man who has enriched his mind by any association with Sophocles is likely to be a better man than one who has filled his days with studying how to add a few pounds to his bank balance.* The unhappiest men I have ever met were those who never wasted a minute on anything which did not 'improve' their income." (My italics.)

That, I hope, clinches the matter. May Dr. Sinha and his periodical be permitted to serve their Motherland for many years to come!

X

It is a very sad blow that Indian journalism has sustained by the death in Calcutta on the 30th of last September, of the ever-to-be-remembered Babu Ramananda Chatterjee. The province of Bengal has produced many illustrious personages, and Babu Ramananda Chatterjee was not least among them. Comparisons are said to be odious, but, try however we may, we cannot get rid of that impulse, deeply implanted in us, to measure one thing against another; and in some instances, perhaps, it is not quite so perverted as it is commonly supposed to be. Without the help of this useful guide we cannot

deliver ourselves of any judgment, whether on the major issues of life, or on the minor. An inscrutable providence has willed that there should be an heirarchy among all created phenomena: even in the celestial regions there are the lesser and the greater. Zeus as incontrovertibly lords it over the other Olympians as they, in their turn, immeasurably tower above us.

Judged by whatever standards, then, the Bengalis hold a pre-eminent position in our country: be a science, or an art, old or new, a Bengali, or a group of Bengalis, will be found, sooner or later, to adorn it by his, or their, undisputed brilliance. I do not go so far as to say that it is a case of "Eclipse" first and the rest nowhere; but, take it by and large, whatever may be the department of human progress in question, the Bengalis, among all Indians, "flame in the forehead of the morning sky". In literature they have been, and still are, the torch-bearers: in the allied art of journalism also, if to a lesser extent, this holds true.

XI

Babu Ramananda Chatterjee belongs to "the giant days before the flood". He sits with the immortals in the company of Surendranath Banerjee, Kristodas Pal, Motilal Ghosh, Bepin Chandra Pal, and others too numerous to mention. He was ever true to the great tradition. The lime-light did not play upon him as it did on some that had been more favourably placed. For one thing,

he himself never invited it: he even shrank from it, as though it were the plague, or a pestilence to be equally dreaded. He was content to let his worth speak for itself; which it never failed to do, be the circumstances what they might. He lived a secluded life, and he would take as much pains not to leave his Ivory Tower as others do never to enter it. Whatever fame came to him came to him absolutely unsought. Even when his name became a house-hold word throughout the country, he saw to it that he kept himself in the back-ground. Truly can it be said of him that he was *in* the world but not *of* it. His own native province of Bengal knew of him only to the extent that he allowed it to know of him—this scholar, saint, and seer in one—and no more.

XII

He began humbly. He was a school-teacher; and then a professor in a college—and a college, too, in remote Allahabad. He gave a large part of his life to the shaping, or the moulding, of the Young Idea. In a sense, indeed, this was his life-long mission: in his later years he laboured to give a direction to mature minds as well. His, then, was that noblest of professions: teaching, and teaching in the most comprehensive meaning of that term. He had a well-stored mind, and was never backward in giving of his plenty to those that were in need.

The present writer had the honour of knowing him during that phase of his career. I was a mere child, but my father and he were friends, and thus

I had the rare privilege of being introduced to him. He had a venerable figure—even at that distance of time; but benevolence oozed out of him, and one was easily put at one's ease in his presence.

There was then, as there is now, a Bengali colony in Allahabad; but Babu Ramananda Chatterjee mixed freely with everyone, be he a Bengali or a non-Bengali, and his death, I am sure, has left the feeling of bereavement in as many hearts in Allahabad as in Calcutta itself. To the end of his days he cherished a deep affection for that city and its people; and whenever he desired to be free for a few days or weeks from the dust and strife of Bengal's capital he would invariably choose Allahabad as his haven of peace.

XIII

While in Allahabad he started the Bengali journal, *Prabasi,* in 1901; and in 1907 brought out the *Modern Review* on which, more than on any other, he left the imprint of his mind. It is no exaggeration to say that the *Modern Review* made him, even as *he* made the *Modern Review.* Ramananda Chatterjee and the *Modern Review* have always been interchangeble terms. This, I have emphasized already, is the most distinguishing mark of a supremely great journalist: he contrives to identify himself with his journal, and the two become a sort of Siamese twins. In a country where the starting of a journalistic venture is decidedly the most risky thing imaginable —the quest for the Holy Grail paling into in-

significance before it—Babu Ramananda Chatterjee not only launched his publication, but succeeded in making it one of the few landmarks in a hapless land. Shakespeare boasted:

"Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme".

In a minor way Babu Ramananda Chatterjee could have applied this couplet to himself and the *Modern Review.* He made it not only the finest review in our country: he made it the only review that is known *outside* our country. To him belongs the unique distinction of *putting his journal on the international map.* In this sense it can very easily be maintained that he was our greatest journalist. Wherever the English language is spoken the names of the *Modern Review* and of its founder and editor, Babu Ramananda Chatterjee, are known. If this be not fame, what is?

XIV

The *Modern Review* owed its pre-eminence to many factors. Its get-up was irreproachable. It came out regularly. It was not a mere dollop of a journal —a kind of literary cheese-paring after supper, as Falstaff might have said—but had "the thews, the stature, bulk and big assemblance" of a really first-class monthly magazine. It was like a baron of beef: you could cut and come again. There was mental meat in it—of a superlative quality. It was not written "by an office-boy for an office-boy", as Lord Salisbury said of someone or other of Lord

Northcliffe's innumerable journals, but was written by experts in their own chosen fields for readers who were past the stage of literary spoon-feeding. There was a very wide variety in the intellectual fare it offered. It avoided sensation—even where the views expressed were extreme. It kept abreast of modern tastes by being as lavishly illustrated as possible.

It published—and encouraged—current literature: if I am not mistaken, it was through the pages of the *Modern Review* that the name of Rabindranath Tagore first became familiar to the outside world. And last, not least, must be mentioned its superb and sustained editorials—written by Babu Ramananda Chatterjee himself: the most scintillating editorials that ever graced an Indian periodical. He gave them the heading: "Notes". They alone were sufficient to ensure the fame of any journal. His learning was prodigious, and equally so was his memory. He could be as devastating in attack as in defence: you never caught his mind in an undress, as Charles Lamb says of a true Caledonian. "He brings his total wealth into company, and gravely unpacks it. His riches are always about him... His understanding is always at its meridian." He had a power of retort that had only to be witnessed to be believed. In politics he was a Congressman and an extremist; but where the Congress differed from the Hindu Mahasabha he was a Hindu Mahasabhaite. But *all* parties lose him.

XV

His habits were simple, and he never lost his love for the common people. He was, if I may say so, one of Nature's gentlemen. The words of Andrew Marvell can be applied to him:

> "He nothing common did or mean
> Upon this memorable scene".

His loss, at this precise juncture, when his own beloved province is passing through the throes of an unprecendented famine, is really irreparable. Our sympathy goes—not only to the members of his family, but also to the members of that greater family, the Bengalis.

XVI

There are not many weeklies worth speaking of in our country. The late Mrs. Annie Besant had one which was really of the first class: the *Commonweal.* There is the *Capital* of Calcutta, which, during the years of the late Mr. Pat Lovett's editorship, could have borne comparison with the finest weeklies of England. His "Ditcher's Diary" used to be its most remarkable feature. It had wit, and it had force, and it had elegance. Pat Lovett was an Irishman, and he was sympathetic to our aspirations. India is the poorer for his loss.

Mention must be made here of the *Triveni* of Madras (and now of Bangalore). It is our best-printed periodical, and, but for the indefatigable labour and indescribable self-sacrifice of its distin-

guished editor, Mr. K. Ramakotiswara Rao, it would have been nowhere. Of him it can be said as of none other that he has always striven *to live up to an ideal.* His reward lies in this that, though passing through innumerable vicissitudes, *Triveni* is still alive and, if it can be said of so sober a journal, kicking. Though fortune has not smiled upon him he has been carrying on—with the help of his inner vision. His periodical has always stood for those two attributes that Matthew Arnold has held up for us: Sweetness and Light. May *Triveni* and its noble editor, Mr. Ramakotiswara Rao, march from strength to strength!

CHAPTER XIII

MORE ABOUT ENGLISH JOURNALISM.

I

I AM aware that I have done what may appear to be but meagre justice to Indian journalism. But I do not think that much more can be said about it—with strict regard for truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Unfortunately, even our best papers do not compare favourably with their English counterparts. That, however, is not saying much. They do not compare favourably with their Anglo-Indian counterparts, either. There is, for instance, not a single Indian-edited daily whose editorials are ever as good as those of the *Statesman* or of the *Times of India*. This is but a bare statement of fact, and we shall do well to face it. " We are mighty fine fellows, but we cannot write like Hazlitt'—so Stevenson remarks somewhere. Indian journalists may be mighty fine fellows, but they cannot write like their English or their Anglo-Indian brethren of the craft.

The writing of a perfect English sentence is an art in itself: and the most of us have not mastered it. If we go deeply into the matter we shall perhaps realise that we have failed to encompass not only a

clear-cut style, but also a well-defined thought-sequence. Nor is there any use in cursing our stars: the fault is in ourselves. It is my conviction that, if only we contrive to set up an exacting standard from a very early age, we too, can work miracles in "the tongue that Shakespeare spake": for of us also it can be said:

> ".....In everything we are sprung
> Of Earth's first blood, have titles manifold".

II

It is the height of folly to excuse our miserable performance on the plea that English is not our mother-tongue. I have admitted elsewhere that it is a credit that we write and speak English even as we do. It is true. But where is the harm in striving a little higher still? Joseph Conrad was a Pole. Besides, he learnt English at a comparatively late age. All the same, he put to shame nearly everyone of his English contemporaries in this affair of writing in their own idiom. The author of *Nostromo* and *Lord Jim* was a more graceful writer than his rivals—Wells, Bennett, and Galsworthy. Precisely because it is not *our* language we must redouble our efforts to master it. Our motto should be: "Find out what is the hardest thing to do, and then go and do it".

There are in our midst persons of the stamp of Sir S. Radhakrishnan and the Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri who can write English as "to the manner born". In the journalistic world itself

there are Mr. Pothan Joseph and Mr. Frank Moraes. Why, then, should we cravenly give up the struggle and retire behind the lines—even if it be only to prepared positions? Let us, on the other hand, gird up our loins and march to the front with drums beating and trumpets blowing: a profession that has produced a Natarajan and a Karunakara Menon, a Mahatma Gandhi and a Mahadev Desai, need never despair. There are as many fish in the sea as ever came out of it.

"The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made".

III

There were some omissions in my chapters dealing with English journalism: I should like to repair them here. For instance, a few words may not be quite out of place in regard to the *Sunday Times*, the *Observer*, the *New Statesman*, the *Spectator*, and that excellent weekly which bears the name of *John O' London*. There is also the *Times Literary Supplement*, whose front-page leading article is in a class by itself: it used to be (it may be still) edited by Mr. D. L. Murray. The *Manchester Guardian Weekly* no longer maintains its old standard. Its "A Book-man's Notes" by "A.N.M." (the late Mr. Allan Monkhouse) were its principal feature during his life-time. That doyen among living English dramatic critics, Mr. James Agate, says of him in his *Ego* (Hamilton: 1935):

"But I was only third in command on the *Manchester Guardian*. Second in command

was Allan Monkhouse, author of the most brilliantly unsuccessful novels and plays that I have ever read or seen....Monkhouse was, and is, the best man I have ever known—the soul of goodness, with a first-class sense of humour. If I had murdered somebody I would sooner confess it to A.N.M. than to any other man". (P. 51.)

Monkhouse died on the night of January 10, 1936. Here is Mr. Agate's tribute to him in his *Ego 2* (Gollancz, 1936):

"Monkhouse was never old, for if his youth was grave his age was boyish.... His outlook was as little grey as any man's and his mood as little monotone. Passion flamed at the heart of him though he kept it rarefied and Meredithian..... Incidentally, *Harry Richmond* was a book he would talk about endlessly. His mind was an October garden and his very presence had a nip in it. Gossip died in that trenchant air, and in the phrase of Lamb—another favourite—he would stop an exaggeration 'like a suspected person in an enemy's country'. He set people at ease quicker than anybody I have known, largely through his gift of appearing enormously interested in whatever you had to say... Nobody ever came away from a 'confab' with Monkhouse without feeling, willy-nilly, that he had been to confession". (Pp. 317-18.)

He concludes his tribute with these words:

> "Well, he is gone, and the music for his going should be of two kinds—the organ for his graver sympathies, and the brave echo of his own laughter. He lived without fuss, and we must not make too much at his dying". (*Ibid*: P. 319.)

IV

The mention of Mr. James Agate's name naturally reminds me of that most glorious of Sunday papers, the *Sunday Times*. It came into prominence under the aegis of the late Mr. Leonard Rees, who, indeed, more than any other, was the architect of its fortunes. He was, incidentally, the architect of *Mr. Agate's* fortunes also: for it was he who elevated Mr. Agate to the proud position of dramatic critic to the *Sunday Times* in June, 1923, which he occupies to this day, and to which, primarily, he owes his not inconsiderable fame. Mr. Rees passed away in 1933: since then Mr. W. W. Hadley has been its editor. The *Sunday Times* is one of the glories of English journalism. The dramatic criticism of Mr. Agate alone would have made it a paper in a thousand: add to them Mr. Desmond MacCarthy's chief-book-review, and Mr. Ernest Newman's musical causerie, and the late Mr. Herbert Sidebotham's ("Scrutator's") centre-page political article, and Mr. Beverley Baxter's "Atticus" column, and the occasional contributions of Mr. G. M. Young, and what "a feast of reason and flow of soul" we have!

Mr. Agate, however, is the *Sunday Times's* chief asset. His powers of expression are the envy even of his colleagues, his learning is formidable, and his wit coruscating. In fact, brilliance is Mr. Agate's middle name and telegraphic address, in a phrase immortalised by Mr. P. G. Wodehouse. He always gives us full measure, and my complaint is that he does not write the *whole* of the *Sunday Times*, barring the advertisements. I am certain that, like Barkis, he would be only too willing to oblige, if his help were solicited: for he can spread himself, as few can, and both his matter and manner can be exciting. There are those, of course, who complain that he is very discursive, and that he is rather more fond than he need be of quoting from his favourite authors,—especially from his favourite French authors. Speaking for myself, I do not mind his discursiveness, nor have I ever lashed myself into a furious rage over his habit of excessive quotation.

The first is not a serious fault if it can be made interesting, and, as for the second, if it is apt, and if it enhances the splendour of one's own writing, it is a sufficient justification in itself. It is a mistaken notion that quotation interrupts the even flow of whatever one has written: it does not, if it is relevant, and if it is beautiful in itself. If one is a fine and interesting writer oneself, one's writings can stand any number of quotations: they become tiresome only when one is a third-rate writer. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch and C. E. Montague quote to their

hearts' content. But they themselves are superb craftsmen, and so we do not mind those interpolated passages. There is another point. *Everyone cannot be discursive, and everyone cannot quote.* Here, as elsewhere, the saying is true: "Nothing succeeds like success".

V

Mr. Agate justifies himself in the matter of his discursiveness in this fashion:

> "The reader has already marked the excessive allusiveness—the inability to refrain from dragging in other writers.... Dryden and Lemaitre and Walkley practised discursiveness, and what was good enough for them is good enough for me." (*Ego:* Hamilton: 1935: P. 20.)

As for quotation he defends himself thus:

> "You cannot dispose of a play by saying that it is either rotten or not rotten. A piece of writing by a playwright calls for a piece of writing by the critic. By this I do not mean fine writing, and the reason why all my life I have been so liberal in quotation has nothing to do with embellishment. The first object in writing is to impart information, and when I quote, it is because I desire to get into the reader's head something which is not there. The reader who remembers the lines:
>
> 'Against the blown rose may they stop their nose
> That kneel'd into the buds'

must lump the old thing being shoved down his throat again for the sake of the ninety-nine readers who do not know it, who haven't a Shakespeare handy, who wouldn't know where to look for the passage if they had, and who with the help of it will better grasp whatever point I am making". (*Ibid:* P. 213.)

That is Mr. Agate all over. Before his joining the *Sunday Times*, he had been the dramatic critic of the *Saturday Review* under Mr. Filson Young, having stepped into the shoes of no less a person than that Grand Old Man of English Letters, Mr. George Bernard Shaw. The mantle of Hazlitt, to howsoever slight an extent, has fallen on him, and more power to his elbow !

VI

About the *Observer* I have already had something to say. Under Mr. Garvin's inspired editorship it prospered beyond its owner's wildest dreams. His own four-column article on current politics was its *piece de resistance:* then came, when he was alive, Mr. Gerald Gould's fiction criticism, Mr. St. John Ervine's dramatic causerie, and Mr. Ivor Brown's theatre notices.

The late Mr. Clifford Sharp was the most brilliant editor that the *New Statesman* ever had. He struck our a line for himself in his leaders. I think "astringent" is the word for them. Mahatma Gandhi has recently coined the phrase, "leonine violence", in connection with the Government's

repressive policy. Mr. Sharp's articles suffered from precisely that attribute. They hurt, and were meant to hurt. Unfortunately, he was anti-Indian: it was he who (over the tell-tale initials, "C.S.") wrote the most fulsome review of Miss Katherine Mayo's *Mother India* that ever found its way into the columns of an English journal. Excerpts from it embellish the dust-cover of that book still. The present editor, Mr. Kingsley Martin, is more sympathetic to our aspirations; but, as an editor, he is not in the same class as his predecessor.

"Y.Y.'s" (Mr. Robert Lynd's) "middles" are, and have been, ever since the *New Statesman* was founded in 1913, by the Webbs, its most distinguishing feature. He is the greatest of living English essayists (he is really Irish, though), Mr. J. B. Priestley coming a close second. If only for his "middles" the *New Statesman's* name has to be mentioned. It had two illustrious literary editors, the first, Sir John Squire (then only Mr. J. C. Squire), and, later, Mr. Desmond MacCarthy: later still it had Mr. R. Ellis Roberts, and, latest of all, Mr. David Garnett. At the present moment it is the most reputed Saturday weekly in England: its grasp of political subjects is marvellous.

VII

John O' London's Weekly is in a different class altogether: its bearings have ever been more literary than political. Until a few years ago it was edited by Mr. Wilfred Whitten, the celebrated "John O'

London". Though he retired from its editorship he continues to contribute his literary causerie over that famous signature. His style is enchanting and his erudition extraordinary. He is a very old man, but, in Shakespeare's words, "there's sap in him yet." His favourite author is Elia: his pet aversion, R. L. S. In one of his articles, "The Author's Author", in his weekly (June 20, 1936), he felt constrained to write: *"Stevenson has his reward, but I have long thought that he wrote like a hair-dresser".*

My answer to this is that we do not know how hair-dressers habitually write; and that, if they habitually write like Stevenson, we may not be far wrong in concluding that some other eminent authors wrote like boot-blacks or charwomen or streets-arabs. To say this of an author whose definition of style is the finest extant certainly requires some audacity. R.L.S. has the final word on that subject:

> "Style is the invariable mark of any master; and for the student who does not aspire so high as to be numbered with the giants, it is still the one quality in which he may improve himself at will. Passion, wisdom, creative force, the power of mystery or colour, are allotted in the hour of birth, and can be neither learned nor simulated. But the just and dexterous use of what qualities we have, the proportion of one part to another and to the whole, the elision of the useless, the accentuation of

> the important, and the preservation of a uniform character end to end—these which, taken together, constitute technical perfection, are to some degree within the reach of industry and intellectual courage".

For the life of me I cannot reconcile this with a *hair-dresser's* notion of the art of writing: always provided, of course, that he *has* a notion of the art of writing. However, I shall let that go: it shows only that "John O' London" has his blind spots, like the rest of us.

The present editor of that weekly is Mr. Frank Whitaker.

Time and Tide is another important weekly that was established only a few years ago. It is owned by Viscountess Rhondda and was also edited by her for some time.

VIII

The *Spectator* must have a section for itself. Its most flourishing period was during the regime of Mr. St. Leo Strachey. Of him Mr. A. G. Gardiner has some scathing things to say in his *Pillars of Society*. He dwells at length on his "congenital rightness of view". He sums him up thus:

> "For the 'moral waxworks' of Mr. Strachey only furnish a disguise for a very ordinary and a rather acrid politician. His moral fervours usually coincide with his political purposes, and play the part of lackey to them..... But

> while his curiously unsympathetic and unimaginative mind makes him merely a geological curiosity of politics, he has a considerable influence in a certain section of society. He has got the measure of that comfortable person who wishes to remain comfortable and undisturbed and still to preserve a conscience —the sort of person who, as Tolstoy said, will do everything for the poor except get off their backs". (Dent: 1916: P. 149.)

When Mr. Strachey died it passed into the hands of Mr. (now Sir) Evelyn Wrench, who also edited it. After some years Sir Evelyn gave up his editorship, and Mr. H. Wilson Harris began to occupy that chair. Under him it has become a better, as well as a more Liberal, paper. But it has never been *my cup of coffee:* it does not belong, and never did belong, to the class of the *Nation* and the *New Statesman* and the *Week-end Review.*

IX

The *Illustrated London News* is the finest illustrated weekly in England, and, probably, in the whole world. It had once an additional importance, in that it could boast of a literary causerie from the pen of no less a person than the late Mr. G. K. Chesterton. As a causerie it perhaps held pride of place among all such: there is no doubt that he gave the best of himself to it. After his demise his mantle descended on that distinguished modern biographer, Mr. Arthur Bryant.

The *Evening Standard* had once the distinction of being edited by that other noted modern biographer, the late Mr. "E. T. Raymond"—really, Mr. E. Raymond Thompson: his pen-portraits rank second only to Mr. A. G. Gardiner's. It had another title to fame--it secured the services of Arnold Bennett for its weekly literary article, paying him a sidereal salary for it. When that famous novelist passed away it appointed Mr. J. B. Priestley in his place. Mr. Priestley relinquished his position after but a brief tenure.

X

Sir John (then only Mr. J. C.) Squire had a brilliant notion when he started his superb literary monthly, the *London Mercury.* It had the grandest array of literary men that any periodical ever had. It was a beautifully produced magazine, and was definitely a success. I am, therefore, at a loss to know why it was allowed to pass into oblivion.

Mr. Desmond MacCarthy, who succeeded the late Sir Edmund Gosse as the biggest literary gun on the staff of the *Sunday Times* and who, I am happy to be able to say, is still functioning in that capacity, emulated the example of Squire in starting another literary monthly, *Life & Letters.* It never attained to the importance of the *London Mercury:* after a few years it was changed into a quarterly, and, after a few more, it ceased publication altogether.

The *Fortnightly Review* had once the distinction of having Lord Morley (then plain Mr. John Morley)

as its editor: that was perhaps its halcyon period. When I came of an age to read it, its destinies were presided over by the late Mr. W. L. Courtney, a writer of considerable erudition and charm. After his death its importance declined.

Next to the *Fortnightly* comes the *Contemporary Review,* which belongs to the Liberal tradition; and then the *Nineteenth Century & After.*

The *Edinburgh Review,* that "Blue and Buff", brilliantly edited by the late Mr. Harold Cox, is no more: the *Quarterly,* its rival, is still alive. The *Strand Magazine* holds pride of place among those magazines which publish, chiefly, short stories.

I have not mentioned the half-penny papers because they do not appeal to me: no, not even the *Daily Herald.* I do not like small-size papers, and I do not like a plethora of pictures, and I do not like half-a-column leading articles—with sub-headings into the bargain. This is not journalism as I understand the term.

CHAPTER XIV

A REVIEW OF REVIEWS

I

IT used to be considered, in the unregenerate days before the Flood, that only an extremely efficient person could ever aspire to be an editor—even of a mediocre paper. The reason was that "in that dark backward and abysm of time" it was not, to put it mildly, all beer and skittles being one. One had to be really a "live wire" to achieve that enviable position. But, apart from that, an editor, of old, was *somebody:* he might not have been precisely to your or my taste, but he was bound to be an intellectual giant who commanded one's respect even if he could not enforce one's allegiance.

One rendered homage to his eminence, whether one agreed, or disagreed, with his policy. It was a case of bowing before solid, substantial worth. One could no more *gesticulate* that worth away than King Canute could order the ocean to recede. One mentioned the paper's name, or that of its chief, with bated breath and whispering humbleness. In fact, the two were, in a manner of speaking, inseparable. In the words of Mrs. Hemans,

"They grew in beauty, side by side;
They filled one home with glee".

They were, if you like, as inextricable as a Governor and his special powers, or a movie star and her *decree nisi.* If one talked of the *Nation,* one, by implication, talked of Massingham also: if of the *Westminster Gazette,* of Spender as well: if of the *Manchester Guardian,* of Scott no less: if of the *Daily News,* of Gardiner too. is there any paper in India where that kind of identification is possible? To ask the question is to give the answer.

As I have taken pains to point out more than once before, Massingham's *Nation* was, and is, my ideal weekly. When it was at the height of its fame it was absolutely unapproachable: nor can any weekly of to-day compete with it. Even its appearance was splendid. To have it every week in one's hand was to be rich beyond the dreams of avarice. One could flaunt it in the faces of one's friends as one could flaunt a gold wrist watch or a brand new tie.

The pity of it, however, was that, even if one read it from beginning to end without missing a single line, it could be finished in a day or two at the most, and then one had to wait for five or six days for the next issue. It was a problem how to pass that time meanwhile, how to possess one's soul in patience till the next "foreign mail day" arrived. True, there were the *New Statesman* and the rest, but what assuagement could they bring to a man who had tasted of the quality of the *Nation*? "Remember,

Codlin is the friend, not Short", says a character in one of Dickens's novels. Well, that was how matters stood between Massingham's weekly and its devotees.

II

The finest of the existing weeklies is, undoubtedly, the *Sunday Times*. Something in the *New Statesman* has always repelled me, both in the past, when the late Mr. Clifford Sharp filled the editorial *gadi*, and now, when Mr. Kingsley Martin occupies it. It has a strident tone that is not to my taste; and its literary section has never been up to the mark—if one excepts Mr. Robert Lynd's weekly essay. As for the *Observer*, its period of glory is past.

My *ideal* weekly would be of the type of the *Sunday Times*. Its editor (I am speaking of *living* men) would be Mr. Gerald Barry. The leading article would be by himself, or, in his absence, by Mr. H. N. Brailsford. The dramatic criticism would be by Mr. James Agate, *and it should never be less than two full columns*. There would be *two* "middles", one by Mr. J. B. Priestley, and the other by Mr. Hilaire Belloc: two *long* book-reviews, one by Mr. G. M. Young, the other by Mr. Desmond MacCarthy: an article on "the dismal science" by Mr. G. D. H. Cole: film criticism by Miss C. A. Lejeune: music criticism by Mr. Ernest Newman: fiction criticism by Mr. L. P. Hartley: a centre-page political article by Mr. J. L. Garvin: social gossip by Mr. A. Beverley Baxter ("Atticus" of the *Sunday Times*): other book-reviews by Mr. Ivor Brown, Miss

Rebecca West, Mr. H. M. Tomlinson, Mr. Edward Shanks, Mr. Harold Nicolson, Mr. Robert Lynd, Mr. Neville Cardus, and Mr. Charles Morgan. Of course, the paper would have many pages. I should not mind that. The assumption is that there is no war on.

But, in spite of all this, how to make up for "A Wayfarer's Diary" by the late H. W. Massingham and "Back Numbers" by "Stet" (the late T. Earle Welby)? I could have said of each of them—my twin idols:

"Tarry, dear cousin Suffolk!
My soul shall thine keep company to heaven:
Tarry, sweet soul, for mine, then fly abreast!"

III

How to make up, again, for the late C. E. Montague's leading articles or dramatic criticisms? I have written about Montague already. But, in view of the fact that many Indians do not seem to have heard of this particular star in the English journalistic firmament, I should like to quote a few remarks of Mr. James Agate. In his book on *Playgoing* (Jarrolds: 1927) he has given it as his definite opinion that Montague was the greatest dramatic critic anywhere and in any language. Up and down his books and articles you will find him rendering homage to that fine writer. In his *Ego*, for instance, Mr. Agate lets himself go in this fashion:

"This is the place to say something about C. E. Montague, the paper's (i.e., the

> *Manchester Guardian's*) Great Man after C. P. Scott.... He was kindness itself, but you had to solicit that kindness..... One went into Montague's little room at the *Manchester Guardian* office and found him standing at a sort of writing-pulpit, apparently, in view of the intensity of his attention, to you, utterly idle. Yet he was probably in the middle of a piece of pyrotechnics in comparison with which the virtuosities of concert performances are mere rushlights. Next morning, when you read your paper, you realised that you had broken into the middle of some Liszt-like but purely English rhapsody, that the Great Man had stopped in the middle of his soaring octaves, suspended his performance to listen to your futilities, bowed you out, and resumed his passage at the demisemiquaver of his leaving off". (*Ego:* Hamilton, 1935: Pp. 44-45.)

Finally, he applies to Montague what a leader-writer of the *Manchester Guardian* wrote on the death of Swinburne:

> "He has been to young men everywhere an intoxication and a passion, awakening half-formed desires, hidden longings and impulses, and secret enthusiasms, and wielding sway more imperiously over heart and sense and soul than any other man of his time did over the intellect or the reason of his disciples.

> And now that this happy-starred spirit has shot into the spiritual land he will still live in the hearts of those who read his writings, who hate the tyrannies and the wrongs that he hated, and love freedom and the spaces of earth and sea that he loved". (*Ibid:* Pp. 50-51.)

IV

Among a reputed newspaper's "features" is one known as "book-reviewing". It is a very important feature, and may make or mar the paper concerned. Here it is my purpose to jot down my views upon it. It has been declared, by one who ought to know, that it is not everybody who says, "Lord! Lord!", that can enter the Kingdom of Heaven: a truism that has the merit, in my opinion, of being meticulously true. Mere shouting at the top of one's voice does not unlock the gates of anything: if it did, matters would become wonderfully (and sometimes even woefully) simple. We have all heard of the sorry plight of the lady who protested too much. Similar is the case with your spiritual gentleman, falsely so called: the more he mentions the name of God, the more he may be taking God's name in vain.

A reviewer, in my opinion, is in a like predicament. Every review of a book, or a series of books, does not necessarily deserve that cognomen. On the contrary, it may, very often, be a complete travesty of it. Not one in a dozen reviewers, I dare to say, can, if put to the test, fully sustain his claim to that title. The truth is that there is a rooted mis-

conception in the public mind on this matter of book-reviewing. Unhappily, it is regarded as the simplest possible affair: one, for instance, as easy as falling off a log, or sliding down an inclined plane. But the fact is far otherwise. Book-reviewing, I should like to lay down with all the emphasis at my command, is no more capable of achievement by every Tom, Dick, and Harry than, say. astronomy, or mountaineering, or numismatics is.

V

There is, no doubt, another aspect of the problem. After all, reviewers—or the most of them—may not really be so blameworthy as they appear at first sight. In many instances, it is apparent, they are compelled to do that for which they have neither the will nor the competence. The unpleasant duty is, more often than not, *thrust* upon them. Even a willing horse must not be goaded over-much. There are so many books that are being turned out by the printing presses day in and day out. What can the poor editor do in such circumstances? So he runs about hither and thither among his friends and begs of them the favour of reviewing the books under the weight of which his table is groaning. Muttering comminations within himself he abjures them to do the thing somehow or other. Well, to cut a long story short, they do it—*somehow or other.* The result is not seldom disappointing. But what else can one expect? Can we gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?

I can think of but one remedy. I suggest that only those journals that can afford both the space and the material ought to go in for this luxury of book-reviewing: the rest, meanwhile, remaining content to exercise a wise self-control in not even trying to touch that which they cannot hope ever to adorn. And *some* books, let me say outright, ought not to be reviewed at all. *Selection and centralization*: these are the two desiderata. It would be best, of course, if a paper could bring out a special supplement every week for this purpose. The proprietors of the London *Times* were never so happily inspired as when they originated a *separate* publication under the name of the *Times Literary Supplement,* which, without question, is unique in its own *genre.* Failing this, it would be well to set apart *entire* pages once, or even twice or thrice, every week, specially for book-reviews: as is done by the *Daily Telegraph* and the *News Chronicle,* for instance.

VI

Something now remains to be said about *how* a book-review should be written. *The author's point of view must, in all cases, be kept before the reader's mind.* Some sort of indication must be given about the former's trend of thought; and, however reprehensible it may seem to be, the latter must not lose his, or her, temper. I am perfectly aware that there are certain situations when it becomes almost impossible to follow this injunction: human nature can

bear just so much and no more! Suppose the book under consideration is *Mother India,* or its not less revolting sequel, *Slaves of the Gods,* written by that exemplary virgin, the late Miss Katherine Mayo, of Philadelphia, U.S.A. Suppose, further, that the reviewer is an Indian—and a Hindu at that. Well, it needs no clairvoyant to predict that the situation will be an extremely trying one. The reviewer may say to himself, as Bertie Wooster once confided to his factotum:

> "Man and boy, Jeeves, I have been in some tough spots in my time, but this one wins the mottled oyster".

He will be tempted to explode: every cell of his body and mind being on fire, as it were. But even in this extreme instance he will be well advised to keep a tight hold upon himself. Our calumniatrix-in-chief may have, after all, a message to impart to us; and, though that message may be difficult to isolate from the heaps of vulgar abuse surrounding, and all but smothering, it, like a costly jewel embedded in innumerable folds of cotton-wool, still the time, in my opinion, may not be ill-spent, nor the effort wasted, in "putting it across" to the millions and millions of people who inhabit our country. *So long as a book is written with a definite and ascertainable purpose, that purpose must be done full justice to, no matter what the extraneous circumstances may be.* The only thing that we must

not, on any account, tolerate is pretension: what the Americans call "high-falutin". Whenever, and wherever, this is detected we must take care to give a resounding thwack upon its back: such a thwack as George Meredith extols in his famous extravaganza, *The Shaving of Shagpat.* For the rest, a little kindness, a little consideration, is never out of place.

VII

Having said so much about a review being a faithful portrait of the book in question, I should like further to state that it should not be a mere synopsis of it: else, where does criticism come in? *A reviewer is a critic in little.* If one has sufficient space at one's command, one may let onself go while reviewing a book: provided, always, that the book merits such treatment, and that the reviewer is a competent writer himself. If these conditions are satisfied one may, without any undue risk, write an independent essay on the theme of the book, at the same time keeping an eye on its central point, or points. And why not? A review should not be a mere catalogue or prospectus: *it should throb with a life of its own.* Some of the most distinguished reviewers have adopted this mode, and have been none the worse for it. Did not Anatole France once observe that "the good critic is he who relates the adventures of his own soul among masterpieces"? This dictum loses none of its force even if the books under consideration are not masterpieces.

VIII

Finally, no one, I venture to think, should dissertate upon a book, or upon an author, with which, or with whom, for one reason or another, he does not happen to find himself in sympathy. Destructive criticism is the easiest thing on earth, and anyone can perpetrate it. Indeed, it is quite possible, on this hypothesis, to write a damaging estimate even of Shakespeare that shall show him to be no better than an amateur in literature. This, however, is not to suggest that criticism should flow in one uninterrupted stream of applause: it would be to err at the opposite extreme. No author—not even the greatest that ever was—is immaculate. Has not Homer himself been accused of nodding now and then?

Taking the example of Shakespeare, again, an excellent article could be written showing what a bad craftsman he was. There never, perhaps, was a more careless writer. Everyone remembers the famous retort of Ben Jonson when somebody had been praising Shakespeare for not being in the habit of blotting out a single line of his manuscript: "Would to God he had blotted out a thousand!" All this, however, does not invalidate my argument. *Some sympathy is demanded of him who sets out to appraise the works of an author.*

Moreover, if one examines critical writings closely, one will find that the best criticisms have invariably been laudatory. That is why Pater, as Mr. Robert Lynd has noted, called his volume of criti-

cisms, *Appreciations*. That is why, to take a more recent example, the late Mr. G. K. Chesterton's *Charle Dickens* is the most masterly book that has as yet been written upon that great novelist. My point is very simple. The critic, or reviewer, should not, as far as possible, say gloatingly: " I have come to bury Caesar, not to praise him". He should, on the contrary, come to praise him: *all other things, of course, being equal.* Else, let him keep away: there are others who can do the job better than he.

So far as book-reviewing is concerned, let us always bear these pregnant words of Mr. Robert Lynd in mind:

> "But, when all is said, the taste, which is an essential quality of a critic, is something with which he is born. It is something which is not born of reading Sophocles and Plato, and does not perish of reading Miss Marie Corelli. This taste must illuminate all the reviewer's portraits. Without it he had far better be a coach-builder than a reviewer of books. It is this taste in the background that gives distinction to a tolerant and humorous review of even the most unambitious detective story". (*The Art of Letters:* Duckworth: 1928. P. 279.)

CHAPTER XV

THE LEADING ARTICLE—I

I

A NEWSPAPER'S interests should be many-sided: as variegated, indeed, as life itself. But often enough, unfortunately, it turns out to be but a counsel of perfection. A pattern may be laid up in heaven in which this is followed to the very letter: here, below, it is honoured more in the breach than in the observance. Especially is this so in our own hapless country, where newspapers seem to have but one function—namely, to serve their party. In regard to other matters they are, if I may put it that way, stone-deaf and colour-blind: the world may go to the blazes for all they care. Politics occupy their attention to the exclusion of almost everything else.

Perhaps this cannot be helped in the case of a subject-nation. We are all politicians nowadays, either full-fledged, or only in the making. We cannot bear the burden of this too, too solid foreign government. It hits us in the eye wherever our occasions—lawful or otherwise—take us; and we are actuated by this one desire of counter-acting the

slings and arrows of our outrageous fortune. Everyone of us is a fiery patriot in his heart; and that explains why our organs of public opinion are unduly weighted down with political lore. Their lightest paragraphs have politics in their background: their flimsiest items of news deal with some political activity or other.

The political scene, in fact, is not only the raw material but the finished product as well of our dailies, weeklies, monthlies, quarterlies, and half-yearlies. It is both the warp and the woof of their texture. I am not to be understood as scoffing at this state of affairs. As I have myself indicated, it cannot be helped. Situated as we are, politics form, naturally, the predominant interest of our lives, and our newspapers but reflect that interest. Still, it is to be deplored: *the colour-scheme of our popular press is, more or less, monochrome, and tends as such to be dull to the verge of distraction.*

II

This is the reason for the extraordinary importance of the leading article. Even otherwise its importance cannot be minimised. *The leading article is the expression of a paper's policy.* It is more. It is the expression of the policy of the party to which that paper belongs. It is the mouthpiece not only of the paper's editor but of the caucus as a whole. The leading article can thus sway the political fortunes of a country—particularly if the country is free.

For instance, the editorials of the London *Times* can work wonders, and have worked wonders in their time. During Delane's reign it was, in its own fashion, the king-maker. More recently, it was mostly owing to the late Mr. H. W. Massingham's leading articles and "A Wayfarer's Diary" in the *Nation* that Mr. Lloyd George's reputation slumped, in the way and to the degree it did, during and after the last war. I am one of those who read all those articles at the time, and I can testify to their terrific hitting power. He proved in his own person that the pen is mightier far than the sword.

In 1915 there had been some persons in England who were much taken up with the idea of introducing conscription into the country. They succeeded eventually. But I doubt whether their campaign would have triumphed but for Mr. Ian Colvin's leading articles in the *Morning Post*. The late Mr. H. W. Gwynne was the paper's editor in those days, and Mr. Colvin its chief leader-writer. Day in and day out he wrote on the same subject. He did not merely write. He thundered. In the end his and his party's efforts were crowned with victory, and the voluntary system was abandoned.

Spender's leading articles in the *Westminster Gazette* were equally powerful. He was the man behind the successive Liberal Governments, and his editorials wielded extraordinary influence. In addition, he was one of the greatest exponents of this branch of journalism.

III

Even in free countries, where newspapers can afford to have a multiplicity, a catholicity, of interests—where, in other words, they are not "cribb'd, cabin'd, and confin'd" to one topic of discussion only, whatever the season and the hour—politics usurp the lion's share of importance; and the leading article, being mainly political, can be said, without any exaggeration, to be the principal feature of the paper concerned. Originally, the editor himself was in duty bound to write it; and this salutary practice prevailed for a considerable period. Latterly, the convention has grown that the editor should be merely a sort of administrator-in-chief and that these leading articles should be written by persons appointed primarily for that purpose, called leader-writers, and that, if the paper is a very important one, there should be one among them designated as the *chief* leader-writer. The editor thus gradually came to be a figure-head.

But even where the editor himself could write, and, in fact, often did write, and write better than all his other contributors put together, he had the assistance of leader-writers. Thus, for example, C. P. Scott could never have been given the title of a mere figure-head editor. But he had to have leader-writers on his paper, and three of his chief leaders-writers won renown far and wide: I refer to W. T. Arnold, L. T. Hobhouse, and the last, though

not the least, of them, his own son-in-law, C. E. Montague.

Then, again, Massingham was the most famous writing-editor that ever lived; and he himself wrote a very large number of the leading articles of the *Daily Chronicle* and, later on, of the *Nation*, and the more important of these bore his initials, "H.W.M.", at the bottom; but, nevertheless, he could not dispense with the services of leader-writers. He had Messrs. J. L. Hammond and H. N. Brailsford during his *Nation* tenure; both excellent craftsmen themselves.

IV

The idea behind it is probably this,—that the editor should supervise the *whole*, and let each part of it be run by a specialist in his line. Where there are *several* leader-writers the notion is that one of them should be deputed to write on foreign affairs, one on home affairs, one on finance, one on colonial subjects and the like. The London *Times*, for instance, employs experts in every field of knowledge. The late Sir Valentine Chirol had been the "Indian" editor on the paper for long, and Mr. H. Wickham Steed the "Foreign" editor. Mr. Steed was the editor himself during one year, 1918-1919, in the absence of its permanent editor, Mr. Geoffrey Dawson—and he edited it very ably. Generally there are three "leaders", the first, the second, and the third: the first is invariably written by the chief leader-writer, and is on the topic of the hour. The second is, as the name implies, of but secondary

importance. The third may be on anything, and generally is a short "middle" with a topical interest at its core but enlivened by literary twists and turns: light enough, but not too light, at places even thoroughly profound, touching, so to speak, "the kindred points of Heaven and Home".

V

I, whose interest is, and has been, mainly literary, and who have often looked askance at the political scene, have yet to acknowledge the supreme importance of the editorials in a given paper. They set its tone, as it were, and are highly instructive to study. In especial, they serve to induce a healthy modesty in the reader. For instance, it is not *everybody* that can fill a column or two daily on different subjects. Today the leader-writer may, with becoming gravity, discourse upon Plato and Aristotle, Xenophon and Longinus, and, tomorrow, without so much as a "by your leave" or a "with your leave", write ecstatically on the Beaumont Committee's Report on the Indian Cricket Tour in England, or the clove trade in Zanzibar. If he is worth his salt he can make even a column of statistics interesting, and can deal with Gaulle and Giraud, Freud and Jung, Jeans and Eddington, to excellent purpose; and, given this necessary condition, again, the state of the American cotton market, and the decline and fall of the gold standard, and the romantic history of the devaluation of the franc, will be all the same to him.

Today the Mareth Line may interest him, and tomorrow the Mahatma's release: all, *all*, are grist to his mill. I am not the man to belittle the importance of the leading article, or even of a tiny editorial "paragraph".

VI

In England, in the Sunday papers, there is, in addition to the editorials, a special article on the topic of the week in "the dead vast and middle" of the editorial page. In the *Sunday Times* this used to be the monopoly of "Scrutator"—the late Mr. Herbert Sidebotham—during his life-time. When he died, three or four years ago, the late Mr. J. A. Spender stepped into his shoes. As a political writer Mr. Sidebotham—if we leave aside the names of Scott and Massingham and Montague—was in a class by himself: he wielded a facile pen, and his manner could be fascinating, even apart from his matter.

His scholarship was immense: and the *Sunday Times* owed its chief importance to his delightful articles. As one who has read almost all of them, not excluding the very last he was ever destined to write "while this machine was to him", I cannot but mourn the loss the profession has sustained by his untimely demise. He was a Manchester man and was one of those who learnt journalism at the feet of C. P. Scott. At one time, I believe, he had been a Liberal; but, subsequently, he came to hitch his wagon to the Conservative star. That was how he

gravitated to the *Sunday Times*. But, just now, I am not concerned with his political faith. Mr. Ian Colvin is a Tory of Tories, but I have not admired his writings a whit less on that account. Why, then, should I hesitate to bestow my meed of praise on one who, even at his political worst, could not be counted among the Diehards and the Last-Ditchers? Sidebotham was a Tory only "north-north-west". When the wind was "southerly" he knew, like Hamlet, "a hawk from a handsaw".

VII

He had a smooth, flexible style, and he could vary his mood to the occasion. His war articles were the pick of the basket: he was an expert on strategy and could give points to our modern military "spokesmen" and beat them. He had a luminous mind and could make even the most complex theme both simple and interesting. The late Mr. Herbert Paul—who, by the way, had been for long a leader-writer on the *Daily News*—said of Swift, in his admirable book, *Men and Letters:*

> "Until Swift became a lunatic, *his mind cut like diamond through the hardest substances in its way.* No sophistry deceived him. No difficulty ever puzzled him. *There was nothing he thought which he could not express.* The pellucid simplicity of his style, both in prose and verse, came of clear thinking and sound reasoning, assisted by the habit of daily explanation to unlettered women. *It is easy*

> *to understand him, because he understood so easily himself*". (My italics.) (John Lane, 1915. Pp. 282-283.)

We may borrow these words to describe Sidebotham himself. "His mind cut like a diamond through the hardest substances in its way". "There was nothing he thought which he could not express". "It is easy to understand him, because he understood so easily himself". Other "Scrutators" have followed Sidebotham, but it can be confidently asserted that there was only *one* Richmond in this field. Sidebotham was a political writer *a outrance:* very few even of those who specialised in his own line could so much as touch the hem of his garment.

VIII

The chief leader-writer of the *Sunday Times* is, and has been these many years, Mr. R. C. K. Ensor. He is a gifted writer, but, when Mr. Sidebotham was alive, his special articles had the knack of putting Mr. Ensor's editorials in the shade. The *Observer's* special political articles were written by Mr. J. L. Garvin himself, its editor, and under his own name. I have devoted a few lines to that "fiery particle" in an earlier chapter. But, with the best will in the world, I cannot claim that his articles were a patch on Sidebotham's. For one thing, they lacked the supreme merit of compression. Mr. James Agate, in his *Ego*, unearths an article of Sidebotham's on the late Mr. G. H. Mair in the *Daily Graphic*. *This*

paragraph of his can be applied to Sidebotham himself word for word:

> "He had immense industry and forgot nothing; an insatiable curiosity about whatever was new, whether it was scholarship, literature, or affairs, and sufficient philosophy to be tidy and orderly in his mind; he had the tongue of a cynic but a disposition that was amiable to weakness, especially where his friends were concerned; a fluent and ready vocabulary, whether speaking or writing, but defective in the one respect that it did not contain a single No. In his relaxation he took more out of himself than most people when they are working; he knew no repose but flung himself from violent mental work into equally violent strain of another kind; he seemed at times anxious to wring every experience and interest in life dry. Yet he never did. To the end he was always keen, never bored with anything and his zest in life retained its sharp edge. But the mind shook the body to pieces like a too high-mettled horse running away with the frail carriage and kicking it to pieces. And so he died before his time. Poor Mair!" (*Ego:* Hamilton: 1935: P. 89.)

Poor Sidebotham!

CHAPTER XVI

THE LEADING ARTICLE—II

I

LET me hark back to our own country. If even in England politics play such an important part in the life of newspapers it can be very easily imagined what a major role they play in India. It follows that *our* leading articles are not to be despised. They have their allotted place in our political warfare. In a sense, they are even its vanguards. They are the spear-points in our restless offensive against an obdurate bureaucracy. As such they have to be reckoned with by friends and foes alike. The bureaucracy, of course, scans them minutely for its own reasons. *We* exaggerate their worth because they are our own—our very own: *they*, the Olympians, magnify them out of all proportion for equally obvious reasons: to locate the germs of sedition wherever they may be lurking. For they swear by their press laws and ordinances galore, which, out of sheer affection for us, they, from time to time, revise and enlarge and replenish to suit the requirements of a swiftly changing political situation.

Our benign government does not believe in sparing the rod. An erring child *has* to be chastised—and for its own benefit, too. As for the number of these laws and ordinances I am not so presumptuous as to count and to tabulate them: panting pen toils after their names in vain. Our statute-book gives them pride of place. All the more comfortable seats in it are reserved for them. Even in these days of acute paper shortage their expansion seems to be unlimited. Else, a recalcitrant populace, the floodgates of its resentment flung wide open by incandescent editorials and head-lines, may storm the Bastilles of our bureaucracy at its sweet will and pleasure. Our rulers wisely take time by the forelock and barricade themselves behind the stout walls of unrepealable press laws and emergency legislation and Defence of India Rules and—in short, all the weapons and implements in their inexhaustible armoury of repression. For them, therefore, our political writings are invested with an importance that they may, often enough, lack in reality: they are scanned and scrutinized with the attention born of hatred. They look for "disaffection" and "contempt" even where they cannot possibly exist; and come down with "leonine violence" on the most harmless of peccadilloes.

Our leader-writers have to steer a hazardous course between the Scylla of the numerous press laws that disfigure our statute-book and the Charybdis of a too docile submission to the vagaries of an exceedingly sharp-eyed bureaucracy. Naturally,

they start with a severe handicap, which, not seldom, cramps their style. They have to rummage their vocabularies for words which while sailing close enough to the wind, leave them ample scope for confining themselves within the four corners of these laws and regulations. They have to learn to "by-pass" violent expressions, to "outflank" abusive epithets, and to substitute more innocent ones, the while contriving to retain as much of the originally intended sting and spirit as possible.

II

For instance, however much their bosoms may heave with righteous indignation, our editors are permanently debarred from paying such compliments to one another or to the Government as was fashionable in Dickens's Eatanswill. *There* everyone was either a Blue or a Buff—a Tory or a Liberal; and there were two newspapers in the town, the *Eatanswill Gazette* and the *Eatanswill Independent*: "the former advocating Blue principles, and the latter conducted on grounds decidedly Buff".

> "Fine newspapers they were. Such leading articles, and such spirited attacks!—'Our worthless contemporary, the *Gazette*'—'That disgraceful and dastardly journal, the *Independent*'—'That false and scurrilous calumniator, the *Gazette*'—these and other spirit-stirring denunciations were strewn plentifully over the columns of each, in every number, and excited feelings of the most intense delight

> and indignation in the bosoms of the townspeople". (*The Pickwick Papers*: Everyman Edition: P. 160.)

It is true that with all this, Mr. Pott, who presided over the destinies of the *Independent*, could boast to Mr. Pickwick:

> "The press is a mighty engine, Sir. But I trust, Sir, that I have never abused the enormous power I wield. I trust, Sir, that I have never pointed the noble instrument which is placed in my hands against the sacred bosom of private life, or the tender breast of individual reputation". (*Ibid:* P. 164.)

Still, it must be admitted that there was a sprightly forthrightness, a breezy vehemence, about the way the two papers exchanged compliments which is manifestly ill-suited to conditions that obtain here. That vivacity is not for us. It is a measure of the intensity of our conviction that freedom is our birthright, that one day, however far distant it may be, we will be masters in our own house, that, hedged about as we are, and have been, with these protean restrictions on our speeches and writings, we have not yielded to rank pessimism but continue valiantly to demand this boon, and that concession, from a government only too reluctant to part with a shred of power. Our leaders, as long ago as 1885, when the first session of the Indian National Congress was held,

"Saw the distant gates of Eden gleam,
And did not dream it was a dream".

It is the same with us now, half a century later, though the gates are no nearer—though, in fact, they are much more distant than they seemed then, what with our Ameries and Linlithgows, Maxwells and Tottenhams. Politics are in the very atmosphere we breathe, everyone of us is a nationalist to the core, and when we open our mouths we as often as not speak in leading articles.

The more a nation is in bondage the more politically conscious it becomes, and the larger the number of invidious laws that presses us down the more insistent grows our demand to let in the fresh air of self-government into that huge noxious slum which is our country. It does not need a Mahatma or a Maulana to teach us these things: they are in the very stuff of human nature.

III

In his speech when he introduced the Bill for the Government of India in 1833 Macaulay foresaw the day when

> "our subjects.....having become instructed in European knowledge may in some future age demand European institutions. Whether such a day will ever come I know not. *But never will I attempt to avert or to retard it.*

Whenever it comes it will be the proudest day in English history". (My italics.)

He may, no doubt, turn in his grave when he learns that, as recently as March 30, 1943, Mr. Leopold S. Amery, the Secretary of State for India, speaking in the House of Commons on the Government motion for the continuance for another twelve months of the proclamation suspending self-government in certain provinces of India, so far forgot himself as to hold forth in this fashion:

> "Are these points of view (the Hindu Mahasabha's and the Muslim League's, that is) really incompatible? They have not proved incompatible so long as the ultimate control has rested with the impartial authority of this House. Are they really and necessarily incompatible under that democratic freedom which not only the Indian parties but all parties in this House wish India to enjoy? The conclusion to which I have personally been driven by my contact with this problem over the last three years is that the problem is not insoluble. *But it cannot be solved until we, and still more India, can get away from the idea that there is only one sealed pattern of democracy, namely, the particular form of parliamentary executive which we have developed in this country*". (My italics.)

IV

Thus do the Children of Light speak: in particular, those who are said to be fighting not only for their freedom but for the freedom of the entire world. Yet we, in India, may not give the reply that we yearn to give with our whole heart and soul, because this same freedom is denied us. The point is that the Mahatma is unquestionably right when he prefers an India given over, for the time being, to anarchy to an India for ever enchained to another nation. Self-government need not necessarily mean good government. If it is a question of going to the devil we desire to go to the devil in our own way: that is the sum and substance of it. Let us shape our ends as *we* like: we may "rough hew them" in the process, but that is neither here nor there: in that only lies our salvation and the salvation of those who succeed us.

Mr. Bernard Shaw puts the case for this view in his own trenchant way. He is speaking of Ireland. But his words have a bearing on *our* problem no less. In his famous "Preface for Politicians" attached to his play, *John Bull's Other Island*, he gives expression to these noble and unforgettable sentiments:

> "King James the First proved so cleverly and conclusively that the satisfaction of natural rights was incompatible with good government that his courtiers called him Solomon. We, more enlightened, call him Fool, solely be-

> cause we have learnt that nations insist on being governed by their own consent—or, as they put it, by themselves and for themselves —and that they will finally upset a good government which denies them this even if the alternative be a bad government which at least creates and maintains an illusion of democracy. America, as far as one can ascertain, is much worse governed, and has a much more disgraceful political history than England under Charles I, but the American Republic is the stabler Government because it starts from a formal concession of natural rights, and keeps an illusion of safeguarding them by an elaborate machinery of democratic election. *And the final reason why Ireland must have Home Rule is that she has a natural right to it*". (My italics.) (Constable's Standard Edition, 1931: P. 43.)

I have been at pains to indicate that the undue importance that we, in India, attach to politics is not wholly fortuitous, that there is a reason for it if we delve below the surface. Our newspapers inevitably take their colouring from this abnormal situation: that is the price we pay for it.

V

While on the subject of the leading article I may mention that the late C. E. Montague was dead earnest on that branch of journalism and that he showered all the wealth of his irony on the *wrong*

kind of leading article. I refer my readers to his early novel, *A Hind Let Loose* (Methuen, 1910). It is a rollicking fantasia on journalism, or, at any rate, on journalism as it used to be once. I conjecture that this is the only novel in the whole range of English fiction that is pre-occupied, from beginning to end, with journalism, and journalists; and, of course, only a journalist could have written it. Montague knew journalism as few persons have ever known it; and he knew it *con amore*. There is a town called Halland which can boast of two papers, the *Warder* (Conservative) and the *Stalwart* (Liberal), edited respectively by Brumby and Pinn. Both papers happen to have (without, however, the editors being aware of it) *the same leader-writer*, Fay. The entire comedy of the book turns on this fact. The *Warder* was printed at two in the morning, and the *Stalwart* at four.

> "'And so.....' said Fay. The graphic ellipse was wasted on Molly (Fay's wife)..... 'So?' she asked. 'So a man can be here (that is, at the *Warder's* office), say, from ten till one, savin' away at the Empire, and then step across to the *Stalwart*, and save it some more—from the *Warder* and all such perils of the night from a quarter past one till three....'"

VI

Fay might very well have stood for the original of Mr. Facing-Both Ways in Bunyan's masterpiece. He was a consummate artist in a certain type of

leader-writing which used to be the fashion once and which, I believe, is not absolutely extinct even now. Two or three columns of a paper may be filled daily, yet if you begin to analyse what has been written, you will fail to find a single salient thought, or a single pointed phrase: it is merely a sort of literary Barmecide feast, that is all. It scarcely touches the subject: it serves, not to convey any idea, but, rather, to conceal the absence of one. As Montague says:

> "Not till now had he seen, with eyes fully open, the rite of splashing solemnly about in a vocabulary, for splashing's sake, the preference for just jingling, for the sound they made, the bunch of keys that, rightly turned in the locks, were inlets to gardens by rivers in Baghdad. And the strangest thing of all was connoisseurship in the practice; to a man like his uncle there were, it would seem, a better and a worse in the trade of making words stand for nothing; there were qualities of nullity, degrees of skill in keeping mind and head blank; the void was not all one, nor zero a level". (P. 218.)

VII

Fay was capable of writing, on the same night, *two entirely different leaders* on the *same* subject—e.g., on Lord Albry's speech. But it so happened that, on the night in question, the office of the *Stalwart* was burnt down and Pinn, its editor, had to seek the hospitality of Brumby and the *Warder's*

office for the printing of that night's *Stalwart*. While he was hobnobbing with Brumby, Fay, all unawares, entered Brumby's room and there met Pinn's eyes which were staring at him, all amazement. Fay, it is necessary to add, passed as "Moloney" in Pinn's office. Pinn greeted him:

> " 'Moloney! you here!' Brumby stared wildly. 'Fay!' Pinn's eyes hunted round the room. No, there were only the three of them there. He started back as wildly at Brumby's 'Fay!' "

The cat, then, was out of the bag. Fay's goose was, at long last, cooked. He was given the sack all round: a sort of *global* sack, so to speak.

Then followed the farce. Fay-less, the two papers started their new existence on the morrow. But both the venerable editors had reckoned without their host. Highly respectable men both, they lacked one thing—lacking which they lacked all—and that was the gift of writing. For one whole week or so they lashed themselves into leader-writing and managed, by the skin of their teeth, to issue their papers as of old. But there was a lack of the peculiar *Fay-ian* grandeur of phrase and of the genuine journalistic touch about their productions, and their readers were not slow to perceive it: they unerringly placed their fingers on the diseased spot. The talk of the town did not fail to reach the ears of our hoary and perspiring editors. What was to be done now? Nothing else but to kiss the rod, to face the inevita-

ble humiliation, and to solicit Fay's services again: which they accordingly did, *independently of each other*. And the curtain descended on Fay's enhanced honour.

Now, what is the moral of this? He who runs may read it. It is to do away with insincerity in journalism, and to raise the standard of writing, and, what is most important of all, to abolish the custom of *non-writing* editors.

CHAPTER XVII

THE "MIDDLE"

"Artists appear at rare intervals; but there is one simple test of practice of their arrival. The moment they begin to handle their material, the world discovers what an extraordinarily rich and plastic thing it is. It does not matter very much what subject they choose; it matters not at all how often that subject has been treated. The last Madonna may be as good as the first, and there is always a fleet of fighting Temeraires to be towed to their berth".—The late Mr. H. W. Massingham. (*H.W.M*: Cape: 1925: P. 191.)

I

IN most of the weeklies of England it is the practice to have what is called a "middle" in every issue of the paper. It is the technical term for what, in ordinary language, is known as an essay. Sometimes there is more than one "middle". Thus Mr. Robert Lynd has been writing the "middle" in the *New Statesman* ever since it was founded—that is, ever since 1913. For many years the late Mr.

Gerald Gould was responsible for that feature in the *Saturday Review*. He was followed by Mr. J. B. Priestley. Occasionally, they both wrote in the same issue. When Mr. Gerald Barry resigned from the editorship of the *Saturday* and started the *Week-end Review*, Mr. Gould became the regular essayist in that paper.

Mr. H. W. Nevinson was the chief "middles" writer in the *Nation* under Massingham. But, amongst them all, Mr. Robert Lynd occupies the position of pre-eminence; closely followed by Mr. Priestley. The late Mr. E. V. Lucas "did" that column in the *Sunday Times* under the title, "A Wanderer's Note-Book": when he died his mantle fell on Mr. Hilaire Belloc. Mr. Ivor Brown contributed short "middles" occasionally to the *Observer* under the caption, "Brown Studies".

II

The path of the essayist is not, let me suggest, exactly strewn with roses. In his case the difficulty is not a dearth, but a plethora, of subjects. His terms of reference do not hedge his fancy in by finicking restrictions of this or that nature: they are as wide as the overhanging canopy itself. He may, metaphorically speaking, roam the heavens above, the earth below, and the waters underneath the earth; and if still he cannot hit upon a theme, or, having hit upon it, cannot "expand" it to the "measure of his intention", the fault, certainly, lies, not in his stars, but only in himself.

Imaginatively, he may range, at his sweet will, not only from China to Peru and from Khorassan to Kidderminster, but he may, with equal freedom, tackle, while so doing, matters as diverse as a lady's commerce with her looking-glass and a man's intercourse with his Maker. He may elect either to be learned, or to be light: to be ponderous, or to be merely playful. It is touch and go whether he chooses to be "sober, steadfast, and demure" and to keep his "wonted state",

> "With even step, and musing gait,
> And looks commercing with the skies",

or else to drench his essay through and through with a merciless shower of

> "Quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles,
> Nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles",

and generally to give full rein to the spirit of delight.

III

Mr. Robert Lynd ("Y.Y."), as I have already pointed out, has been contributing an essay every week to the *New Statesman* ever since 1913, the year in which it first saw the light of day. He has himself modestly estimated that, up to April, 1934, he must have written about 1,600,000 words by way of "middles" to that journal; and safeguarded himself by saying:

> "If this be imputed to me as a crime my excuse must be that my poverty, and not my will, consented".

Well, how does he proceed? He has, if we are to believe him, a rooted habit of procrastination. He has a job to do, but is averse from doing it, and so willy-nilly postpones it till the last avoidable moment; and, what is more, has an excuse ever ready—connecting the delay with the mislaying of his fountain-pen, or the dropping of a bottle of ink on to the sheets on which he had been writing, or the kitten's lapping up all the milk in the cupboard, or the falling asleep of the man in the moon. These are my own fancies, but it would appear that "Y.Y." is really very ingenious in his apologies. He confesses:

> "From an early age, I wanted to write, but I always hated—and still hate—beginning to write.....I am like a man who wants to go somewhere in his motor-car, and whose engine needs cranking up, and who would gladly avoid the effort of cranking up the engine. Hence, even if I had a week in which to write an article, I should find it difficult to begin writing till the last hours of the last day of the week. Expected to deliver my article by the first post on Thursday morning, I still found myself late on Wednesday night doing my utmost to dodge the necessity of work. How often have I succeeded so well that I have had to set the alarm clock for six and to go down and compel myself to tackle the detested task on a wintry Thursday morning!" (See his

essay, "A Thousand and one 'Middles'", in the *New Statesman* of April 14, 1934.)

IV

The point is that, his temperament being such, he finds himself now and then in a fix: on what should he write? If nothing better offers, and the last minute has arrived, he takes up a dictionary and fills up three columns with what comes in handy; and yet contrives that the resulting attempt shall be both readable and reasonable. Therein lies the secret of your master-essayist. Did I begin this chapter by positing that an essayist suffers, not from a dearh, but from a plethora, of subjects? It is illustrated most aptly in the example I have chosen.

Mr. Lynd would have had his work cut out for him if he had had a subject of limited scope to handle: he would not, then, have had to *run* after it himself and be in a perpetual state of suspense about it. The essayist's job is really not so easy as it looks. Having a veritable universe of themes to select from, he is ever on the horns of a dilemma; and probably ends up by selecting the least suitable. On the other hand, it is comparatively simple if you have to dissertate on the economic condition of the Neolithic man, or the fashion in ladies' hats in the eighteenth century, or the decline and fall of the Moghul Empire. All that you have to do is to mug up your subject, and to take care not to botch it too conspicuously in telling the world what Mr. A., or Mrs. B., has already told it in a more authoritative and,

withal, a more convincing style. But an essayist has both to choose his subject and to illuminate it from unexpected angles. His is a pioneer's work; and, like it, the more praiseworthy.

V

We, in India, do not encourage essayists in our midst: we are much too serious for that. As a race, we are not only not capable of the light touch, but are prone, on the rare occasions when we do meet with it, to look down upon it as though it were of baseness all compact. While articles on Bimetallism and the Binder Report are welcomed with both hands, essays are strictly taboo.

We have to deal with another difficulty. An essay, by its very nature, is lavish of the first person singular: because, in a manner of speaking, it is a record—a haphazard record, but a record nonetheless—of one's own experiences. Consequently, the element of autobiography cannot be altogether dispensed with. Now, this is not misunderstood in the West: *here* it is far otherwise. The vice of egotism is easily imputed in our country, and when once it is imputed it is pretty difficult for the condemned fellow to wriggle himself out of that label.

I have myself met many people who did not feel the slightest compunction in gesticulating away the essays of Messrs. Lynd, Lucas, and Gardiner, Belloc, Chesterton, and Priestley. They brushed them aside like things of no moment—mere flotsam and jetsam floating on the ocean of one's mind. "Why",

they would say, "there is not much stuff in this: there is nothing for the teeth of the intellect to bite on. It is neither a feast of reason, nor a flow of soul. It is a mere rambling discourse, a will o' the wisp, a flimsy, gossamer, a bed of feathers, thistledown, what you will, not a serious effort, nor does it make any pretence of harnessing man's thought down the ages to its particular requirements. Away with it!"

VI

The truth is that this criticism misses its mark entirely. These essays, in the first place, are not so devoid of ideas as we are led to believe. Secondly, the writers concerned have nowhere indicated that they have, in penning them, set out to instruct mankind in all the arts and sciences that ever were. Their purpose was the humbler one of entertaining their readers for the space of half an hour or so, and if, in the process, they contrived not to go off the deep end they were quite content.

As for this mania for ideas, I have long since arrived at the conclusion that it does not amount to much. It is my belief that very few of those who are in the habit of complaining of this deficiency in others are themselves chockful of them: the current of their beings cannot be said to be overflowing with what Browning has called

"Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped".

Your self-styled serious person is, really, in the

majority of instances, shallow at bottom. No ideas in Mr. Hilaire Belloc's essay on "Nothing"? No ideas in Mr. Priestley's essay on "A Fish in Bayswater"? No ideas in the late Mr. Gerald Gould's essay on "Llenglen v. Wills?" No ideas in Mr. Lynd's essay on "Intolerance"? As well proclaim that there is no genuine poetry in:

"Ay, but to die, and go we know not where,
To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods or to reside
In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice;
To be imprisoned in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendant world....." *(Measure for Measure.)*

VII

In sober truth, it is not easy to encompass the light touch. Most often, the *temperament* for that is lacking. The first essential is to educate ourselves to be in a holiday mood now and then: to give a free rein to our fancies. The mind should be allowed to wander where it pleases; and it is enough if there is just a wee bit of continuity from beginning to end. Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Dogberry these wise words: "To be a well-favoured man is the gift of fortune; but to read and write comes by nature". The ability to impart a light touch to one's essays also "comes by nature".

When one peruses the productions of the gentlemen I have named above, one feels that the whole thing is as simple as may be and that it could have been dashed off in a trice. *The error is perceived when one sits down to attempt the same oneself.* Then only does one begin to have a healthy respect for the authors of these so-called flimsies. The fact is that in this world nothing is as easy as it seems; and writing, least of all.

Mr. Desmond MacCarthy has revealed that, behind the apparently effortless ease of Mr. Lynd's writings, there is an amount of honest labour that would have to be seen to be believed. And why not? The gift of mellifluity does not drop down from the heavens like manna from the skies. It has to be diligently cultivated. There is but one way of adding brick to brick. But there are *several* ways of adding word to word. Has not Kipling recorded that there are as many as *ninety-nine* of writing tribal lays? There is one of paring down as well as one of filling up; and there is one, besides, of imparting a musical quality to the written stuff.

Mr. Lynd has, by incessant labour, attained to a prose style of such grace that it is the envy of most of his contemporaries. Yes; "grace" is the word. Think you that any of his sentences and paragraphs can be managed as nonchalantly as, say, shelling beans or peeling potatoes or issuing "statements to the press"? What an imperceptible gradation there is between one sentence of his and another! Mr.

Lynd, indeed, like the generality of his countrymen, is a master of English prose.

Is it widely known that some of the finest English prose has been written by *Irishmen* and *Irishwomen?* Burke and Swift and Goldsmith were Irish. So, if I am not mistaken, were Sheridan and Charlotte Bronte. In our own day, Mr. Shaw is Irish: the late Mr. George Moore and the late Mr. W. B. Yeats and the late Mr. C. E. Montague also belonged to the "Emerald Isle": and the same holds good in the case of Mr. Robert Lynd and Mr. Desmond MacCarthy. There is no doubt that the Irish have proved themselves superior to the English in the matter of the latter's own language. Perhaps there is something in the air of Erin that is conducive to this.

VIII

I am, however, not in favour of *too mnch* lightness. That is why I am not a very ardent admirer of the late Mr. E. V. Lucas's essays. I am his slave when his style and his scholarship are under discussion; but I draw the line at his essays. There must be *some* body of thought even in an essay. It need not, indeed, set out to be brimful of ideas from the start; but it ought, undoubtedly, to gather some *en route*. In a typical "middle" what happens is that some slight thing or other leads the author on to at least one or two profound speculations. One may begin with trivial incidents, but one ought to end on

a more serious note. Mr. Priestley is the essayist for this sort of thing: he "fills the bill" handsomely.

His first collection of essays, *Open House* (Heinemann), proves this up to the hilt. Mr. H. M. Tomlinson could not contain his joy when reviewing it in the old *Saturday*. He said that there was such a body of thought in it that a dozen novels could be made out of it. The praise was not excessive. Take another collection of his essays, *The Balconinny* (Methuen, 1929). There is an essay in that book which is highly representative of this trait in Mr. Priestley. It is entitled: "A Fish in Bayswater". The first sentence runs:

> "The other morning found me walking down Queen's Road, Bayswater, in a deep fit of depression". (P. 82.)

Well, that is harmless enough, and the subject, indeed, suggests such a beginning. Immediately follow these sentences:

> "I cannot remember now why I was feeling so depressed, and I do not suppose that I knew at the time. These are the days when we weep and know not why. Not Bass nor Worthington nor all the foaming brewage of the world shall ever medicine us to that sweet peace that we knew yesterday. We may assume that I had discovered that I was not fit for life or that life was not fit for me. I usually incline towards the latter view, and when I am out of

spirits I see myself as a baffled idealist, betrayed by the very nobility of my mind, in short, as Hamlet in modern dress..... Some people whose digestive processes happen to be excellent, advise you to search for the cause during the actual fit of depression and assure you that once the cause is found the mood will pass. Such people, however, forget that you will probably be too depressed to examine yourself, for at such times nothing is worth the trouble it involves. Even the psycho-analyst would make no headway because his first conviction in this state would be that psycho-analysis was useless. Knowing how blasphemous we can become at these moments, I can even imagine him damning the unconscious". (Pp. 82-83.)

IX

Then he came to a fishmonger's shop, "putting out a delightful cool reek of the foreshore", and saw a very large flat fish.

"The fish itself is not important. I do not know what kind of fish it was, and can only say that it was very large, and very flat, and unusually fishy. The point is, though, that when I saw that fish I immediately thought of the sea. ..... There came to me, in one glorious rush, thoughts and images of white cliffs on our South Coast, the Yorkshire caves and coves I knew as a boy, great Atlantic rollers a day out

> from the Azores, Conrad's *Typhoon*, spray shooting over the Cornish rocks, the overture to the *Flying Dutchman*, the swell of dying seaweed and the feel of sand between my toes, the flying fish in the Carribbean, Melville's *Moby Dick*....." (P. 84.)

He enlarges on this vision that the sight of the fish gave rise to. "I felt a little rush of ecstacy..... Immediately, then, the lights went up everywhere and all life was rich and strange and a marvel, and I was out of spirits no longer". Then he goes on: "These moments are essentially moments of aesthetic vision, and it is out of them that literature and art and music are produced". This leads him on to a discussion of aesthetics. And he concludes in this fashion:

> "There was a time when I read and thought about nothing but aesthetics, but once I had recovered I swore that I would never approach the subject again. But if ever I weaken and bring out a thesis, I feel sure that it will open most strangely—with a fish in Bayswater". (P. 88.)

Well, *this* is what I mean by an "essay". Light enough, but not too light, at places even thoroughly profound, touching, so to speak, "the kindred points of Heaven and Home".

X

I have purposely omitted the name of the late Mr. G. K. Chesterton among essayists, for he was not,

typically, a writer of essays. I do not think that his weekly literary "causeries" in the *Illustrated London News* can be called "middles". On the occasion of the Lamb-dinner (in commemoration of Charles Lamb's Centenary) some years ago he delivered himself of the following statement:

> "I write articles, and a profound schism divides those who write essays and those who write articles. *The essayist inhabits eternity, but the writer of articles is very emphatically under the government of time*".

Another difficulty is that his essays are a feast of paradox. He was never content "to burn a candle in the pale shrine of platitude". To be a writer of paradox one must have a keen intellect; and one must have that rare thing—a capacity for original thinking. A paradox is not, as some suppose, merely an inverted platitude. Further, a paradox must convince—at least for the time being. I hold also that paradox is often necessary to good writing: it is what gives an *edge* to it. But Chesterton overdid it. He employed paradoxes as others indulge in platitudes. As the late Mr. C. Lewis Hind justly remarked:

> "Somebody should always be standing by his side when he is writing essays, saying: 'Gilbert, be dull for a bit. Paradox should be a *souffle*, not a joint'." (*Authors and I:* 1920: P. 60.)

XI

But when G. K. C. was in his stride, every sentence became scintillating: it was as if one had had an electric shock. One was not given time to think: one was carried along by the vehement breeze of the writer's opinions and, temporarily (at any rate), one found oneself in agreement with them; because agreement was so much easier than disagreement. It asked less of one; and it was so much safer. Chesterton, indeed, revelled in paradoxes to such an extent that it was sometimes a positive relief to turn to the most worn-out platitudes—just for a contrast, so to speak. After all, the virtue of paradox is that it is rare, while platitude is only too, too common. But if paradox, by some curious chance, becomes as cheap as platitude, where, then, lies its merit? That is what Chesterton often seemed to forget. One must be economical of one's best weapons; but Chesterton lavished his with the abandon of a monarch.

Chesterton's manner of writing was unique. It was more than brilliant: it was inspired. He weaved patterns all his own. Phrases seemed to drop from nowhere. Words took on unusual meanings. No doubt, the meanings were all there before: only, we had never thought of them until he came along and showed them to us. Chesterton, in short, was a magician with words. With his Prospero's wand he could summon them, as it were, out of the vasty deep.

XII

Side by side with his style went his wit. It was irresistible; and it was exhibited at the least expected places. Like that friend of Dr. Johnson's who had tried, too, to be a philosopher but he didn't know how, cheerfulness was always breaking in, Chesterton might have said that he had tried, too, in his time, to be serious, but he didn't know how, wit was always breaking in. Once in his element he almost rioted in it; and then every sentence of his became sparkling. Often his opinions were belittled because of their admixture with wit. But wit is justified of her children; and wit is next to wisdom.

This was the trouble with Chesterton: his wisdom was often masked as wit; and, for many persons, was *lost* in the wit. But that surely was the fault of his readers, not of himself. Wisdom, I am convinced, is all the better for a little wit. At any rate, speaking for myself, I prefer lively wisdom to that which is merely dismal. But Chesterton himself seemed to be wholly innocent of when he was overdoing his wit. This was what the late Mr. H. W. Nevinson meant when he wrote of him, in his masterly book, *More Changes, More Chances* (Nesbit):

> "Indeed, that man of genius (G.K.C.) has often reminded me of a village pump which, on festal occasions, may run wine, and ordinarily runs first-rate water, but never knows when it

is running wine of the best or water of the best or liquid mud or nothing at all, but always wears the same alluring look of promise". (P. 27.)

CHAPTER XVIII

CONCLUSION

I

I HAVE now come to the end of my book. I am aware that I have left out many matters that, from a strictly professional point of view, ought to have been incorporated in it. But that could not be helped. In my preface I took care to warn my readers that they should not expect an exhaustive treatment of the subject in these pages. I have had neither the time nor the space to do more adequate justice to it. For instance, I have not touched on topics that, in other hands, would have claimed whole chapters to themselves. By the same token, I have chosen to dwell lovingly and at length on those aspects of journalism which, on account of my peculiar "slant of mind", have lain nearest my heart. I offer no apology for laying what some may regard as an undue emphasis on the *writing* part of it.

I know that amongst journalists themselves there is a marked division of opinion on this question: many of them, both by precept and by practice, evidently do not think a huge lot of the *practical* portion of their work. Somehow or other, they do

contrive to fill their columns: nor do they seem to pass sleepless nights over *how* they have filled them. It is possible that *they* are right and not myself. After all, in a thoroughly unreal world, why should we concentrate on any *one* thing, to the exclusion of the rest? Further, today's paper has importance only for today: by tomorrow it becomes lifeless.

Nonetheless, there is a school of thought which definitely does not hold the view that if you have managed to convey the sense the style can take care of itself. My book is addressed to those of my readers who, in this eternal conflict between manner and matter, range themselves on the side of manner. Even this universe of ours, if we come to think of it, is not utterly shapeless: why, then, should our *writing* be so? At any rate, that is how *I* argue; and since this is *my* book that line of argument occupies an important place in it.

I have not mentioned the sub-editor. Well, without him, a paper cannot exist at all. It is he, mainly, who gives to each item of news its position in the paper, and who judges what amount of space to give it; and it is through his hands that most of the paper's matter passes, in the first instance. Someone has said that:

> "the sub-editor's room in a great daily newspaper office is a sort of whispering gallery of the world, and the mind that is competent to apprehend and appraise the significance of its manifold revelations must possess natural

aptitude for its strenuous work, and must have been adequately trained for its task".

II

I have not mentioned the News Editor, whose importance in a newspaper office is daily increasing: nor of the correspondents, home and foreign: nor of the reporters. Then there is the work of "interviewing". This is done both by the correspondents and the reporters. Interviewing postulates extremely high qualifications as well as much previous preparation. I have before me a book from the pen of that "queen of interviewers", Miss Betty Ross, otherwise Mrs. Arram, called *Heads and Tales* (Rich and Cowan: 1934). That veteran journalist and editor, Mr. R. D. Blumenfeld, in his introduction to it, has these wise words on the subject of interviewing:

> "The art of the interviewer lies in reproducing the best things that people have said; in causing them to say better things than they would ordinarily have said; in playing on the harp, so to speak, to bring out the music instead of the twang".

He goes on:

> "It is an old maxim that no two people bear witness to an event, a scene, or an episode in similar terms. Ten witnesses tell ten different versions. So, too, with reports of conversation. They are seldom alike, unless, of

course, the reporter has confined himself exclusively to shorthand notes, when there comes out the mechanical tin-toned flatness so common to the ordinary reporting result. Shorthand interviews destroy the individuality of the subject".

Finally, this is his tribute to Miss Ross herself:

"Miss Betty Ross is no shorthand reporter. She is as much a personality as the personalities whom she reproduces with the magic fluency of her pen. She has the keen eye that detects types, that discerns those things which are not discoverable to the unobservant. Herein lies the art of the interviewer. I recall so well the words of our old friend, Samuel Smiles, who said: ' It is the close observation of little things (as well as of big things) which is the secret of success in business, in art, in science, and in every pursuit of life '."

III

Those who desire to know how the *actual* work is done in a newspaper office will do well to read carefully what the late Mr. Gerald Gould has written on it in his essay, "In Praise of Journalists", in his collection of essays, *The Musical Glasses* (Methuen, 1929):

"There is no other profession, trade, or business in the world, where so many decisions, involving so great a responsibility, have to be made at such a pace. The news pours in, like a

thousand streams in spate, from every continent and every ocean: it comes from reporters, news-agencies, special correspondents, by hand, by post, by wire and air: it foams in flimsies, tingles through telephones, ticks on tapes. The news-editor must receive it, adjust it, estimate it, take a chance on the truth and importance of every item. Through goes the monstrous accumulation heap on heap, to the chief sub-editor, who does another sum in moral proportion, scraps this item, exalts that—gives out the stories for writing up or toning down, judges like lightning the space to be occupied, the page, the position—the capacity and interest of his subordinates —the taste and temper of the waiting public. Splash, lead, fill—the kind of heading, the kind of treatment—all must be settled in a race against the clock; and, perhaps, when all *is* settled, the fatal house telephone will ring, and the editor's unwelcome voice bid the whole order of the paper to be reversed, that way may be made for a political crisis on page one". (Pp. 16-17.)

IV

He continues:

"Up flies the stuff, marked for the printer—every phrase, remember, of even the minutest heading or cross-head, fitted within an exact number of letters: not a hair's-breadth of verge

to play with. This copy, then, is carried by boys or shot through tubes to the composing room. A wise man with shears, as swift and uncontradictable as Atropos, cuts it up and allots it to the compositors. These clatter on the linotypes, and the stories turn (in one sense only) to lead. They are carried to the side, and proofs are pulled: next they are carried to the "stone", and column on column is put together, cut, fitted, locked into a solid page, and pushed through an iron gate into the foundry where half-naked supermen toil in the atmosphere of an inferno. The pages are cast, and carried down to the vast rotary machines, and clamped on, each in its place; a roll of virgin paper is attached to one end of each machine; the word is given, and the machines start. They roar like thunder: they shake the concrete foundation of their home. And out of the other end of them, by miracle, come the newspapers, printed, folded, complete, hundreds to the minute, myriads in the night. And still, everything by the clock: every page must enter the foundry at a given minute: if there is any flaw in type or paper, any weakness in the human or material machines, the whole whirling succession is put out, the giant cogs are arrested, the breakfast tables of the country are threatened with lack of news. The vans are waiting, they are packed with parcels of various sizes: they fly off through the mid-

> night streets, with the minimum of minutes in which to catch the trains. And next morning ten million householders unfold the printed sheets, prop them opprobriously against coffee-pots, and say to their wives: 'Not much in the papers this morning'." (Pp. 17-19.)

Adding to this, like painting the lily or throwing a perfume on the violet, would be, as Shakespeare says, "a wasteful and ridiculous excess".

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